

**Some Spiritual
Guides**
of the
Seventeenth Century

Abbé Huvelin

Trans. Joseph Leonard

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Translated by the Revd Joseph Leonard, C.M.

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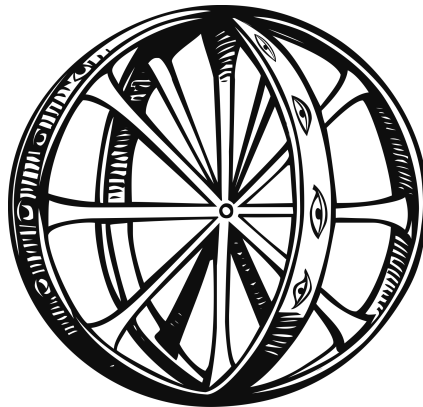
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INTRODUCTION

“Be you therefore perfect” said our Lord Jesus Christ to his followers, in the course of his sermon on the Mount, “as also your heavenly Father is perfect.” But though all are thus called to perfection, yet all are not called to walk in the same way. As in the natural order the perfection of Beethoven is not that of Palestrina, so in the supernatural order the type of perfection of Teresa of Avila is not that of Joan of Arc, nor is the same type of holiness to be looked for in Thomas More as in John Baptist Vianney, the Curé of Ars. Hence the value and, at times, the absolute need of a guide to point out the right way, to warn against perils, and to encourage, it may be, the pilgrim in his progress towards the Heavenly City.

The following pages contain sketches of such spiritual guides. They are all Frenchmen of the seventeenth century, a period in which the greatness of France was revealed not only by eminent soldiers and statesmen, poets and artists, but much more so by men and women whose lives show forth the splendour of holiness. Of these the Abbé de Rancé is perhaps least known to Catholic readers of today. The greatness of the Venerable Jean Jacques Olier is best appreciated by those who are engaged or interested in the training of the clergy, but St Francis de Sales and St Vincent de Paul are revered and loved throughout, and even beyond, the confines of the Catholic Church. These studies are all the more valuable inasmuch as they are the work of a man who was one of the great spiritual directors of the nineteenth century, the Abbé Huvelin, of whom some account will now be given.

The Abbé Huvelin was born at Paris in 1838. He studied at the École Normale, and there acquired that love for Greek literature, and in especial for the works of Plato and the great dramatic poets, which was to remain with him to the end. But his vocation was to be a priest and not a Hellenist. In the address on M. Olier and the seminaries there is a brief sketch of the state of mind of a young man who feels called to the priesthood which has the authentic ring of a personal experience. He entered an ecclesiastical seminary, and later

on went to Rome, where he completed his course of training for the priesthood at the French College, and was there ordained in 1867.

On his return to Paris after ordination he was sent to teach in a seminary. One of the duties entrusted to him was the selection from amongst the students of those whom he deemed to have a true vocation for the priesthood. The charge lay heavy on him, and he was relieved at receiving an appointment to the church of St Eugene in the Rue Sainte Cecile. He remained there for seventeen years, and almost from the beginning the special form his ministry was to take became evident. He was to be, above all, a spiritual director, and the knowledge which fitted him for that task was acquired by hearing confessions. At times he spent twelve and even fourteen hours at a stretch in the confessional. He was transferred to the church of St Augustine in 1875, and remained there until his death.

In his first year at St Augustine's he began to give a series of addresses in the crypt of the church. They were intended for young persons, and were in the nature of supplementary lessons for those who had made their first communion, which was then made at a much later age than now, since Pope Pius X's decree on Communion. A fuller account of the history of these addresses will be found in the unsigned preface to the addresses, which is, I have reason to believe, from the pen of Mademoiselle de Richemont, a devoted friend of Abbé Huvelin's. The originality and charm of these informal talks rapidly attracted an audience. He said at a later date: "I was becoming the fashion, but as that was not in accordance with my ideas I quickly put a stop to it." His sermons in the church also drew large congregations, for as M. René Doumic has said of them: "They are sermons with a personal, penetrating quality of their own; his whole soul flows into these unstudied homilies."¹ They were, however, but a secondary interest in his life, for apart from visits to the sick and dying his days were mainly devoted to hearing confessions and giving spiritual direction.

¹. *Écrivains d'aujourd'hui*, by René Doumic (Paris, Perrin et Cie, 1894), p. 304.

The routine of his life at St Augustine's was varied only by a weekly visit to Fontainebleau, where he heard the confessions of Carmelite nuns, who had a monastery there. When the nuns were banished from France, in the beginning of this century, they settled at Namur, where he paid them a visit every year, usually staying with them for a fortnight. Towards the end of his life he passed the months of August and September at Versailles, lodging in a house that had once been a mansion of the Des Choiseuls, in order to be close to a convent of Poor Clare nuns. Such was his simple, uneventful life.

Adeline, Duchess of Bedford, gives a description of a visit which she paid him in the month of January, 1907, in the pages of the *English Church Review*.¹

"He was accustomed to receive visitors from two to five every day," she writes, "and in the dusty little antechamber, lined with books, and devoid of air, light, or fire, a curious medley of persons awaited their summons. Here was a well-known litterateur and man of the world, there the aged curator of the Chantilly Museum (whose talk was of the Primitives he loved and the collectors he despised), and in the little group of women might be seen a high-born lady, or a servant out of place, and the bent figure of a working woman, ill-clad, weary, shrinking out of sight of the rest. Each entered in the order of arrival, and was ushered into the presence of the priest, who lay upon a couch, overcome with the physical suffering which for years had distorted every limb with intolerable anguish. But once in contact with souls, the fire of his spirit leaped up and burnt deep into the conscience of his hearer."

On her arrival she notes: "There was no fire in the grate; books and papers were strewn on a bureau as they had been left by the owner; facing the door was a statue of St Francis; a few prints hung upon the walls, but all was shrouded in the gathering winter twilight. A dome-like head, covered with sparse, grey hair, lay upon the pillow;

¹. "The Abbé Huvelin," by Adeline, Duchess of Bedford, *English Church Review*, London, January, 1911.

the shaking hand, deformed by years of rheumatic gout, was stretched towards me.” She spoke to him of the Anglican Church and of faith. “Faith,” he said to her, “is like the little night-light that burns in a sick-room; as long as it is there, the obscurity is not complete; we turn towards it and await the daylight.” She spoke to him of Modernism and of some of her Modernist friends. “I gathered,” she goes on, “from various allusions which he made to such matters in the course of conversation that he considered premature and isolated action to be the result of a fretful and restless mind working in egotistic fashion on some fragment of thought, while the great drama (*la politique de Dieu*) was gradually but surely acted out on a stage larger than that occupied by an individual or group.”

Other sayings of his which she noted then or on subsequent meetings were:

1. “To suffer God to work his will in us is a form of soul activity.”
2. “The lights of grace are successive.”
3. “*Egredere*, go out from self and back to the infinity of God.”
4. “Humility is nothing else but a glimpse of Truth. However great our sins may be, still it is our incurable mediocrity of soul that shocks us most when we regard ourselves.”
5. “We should respect the type that God is endeavouring to form in us.”
6. “Mistrust your zeal for doing good to others.”

Speaking of himself, he remarked: “I have taken life on the sad side, and it has helped me to understand many, many failures, many utter ruins. I have striven to reconcile this state of soul with an absolute confidence in God.” In a letter to a friend he writes: “I am scarcely what you think I am; I cry out when hurt, and I do not consider myself to be above anything, any temptation, any sorrow; if I have done any little good in my lifetime it was by God’s permission. I have not kept what was given me; it has passed through my hands.

I quarrel shamefully with those who look upon virtue as striking a noble attitude. *Ego vir videns paupertatem meam.*” {‘I am a man who sees my poverty’, Lam 3:1}

Three years after this interview Abbé Huvelin quitted this life. His physical sufferings had gradually grown worse, and he lost the use of each of his senses in turn. During the last three months of his life he lay speechless and helpless, and on the evening of July 10 his period of exile came to a close. The last words he was heard to utter were: “*Amabo nunquam satis.*” {I will never love enough.}

Amongst the countless souls who were aided and guided by M. Huvelin there are three of outstanding interest, and of these a somewhat full account will now be laid before the reader.

The first of them is the celebrated lexicographer and philosopher, Paul Maximilien Emile Littré, best known, perhaps, by the great dictionary of the French language which he published between the years 1859 and 1872. In his own day he won most fame by his defence of Positivism, and his writings were regarded by Bishop Dupanloup as so immoral and impious that, when in 1863 Littré went forward as a candidate for a seat in the French Academy, Dupanloup was the chief agent of his rejection. So strongly did the Bishop feel that, when Littré was elected in 1871, Dupanloup resigned his seat in the Academy. Littré was, naturally enough, regarded by the anti-clericals of his day as a standard-bearer in the attack on the Church. Hence, on his death in 1881, there was a great outburst of indignation on their part when he was buried according to the rites of the Catholic Church. Echoes of this may even be heard today. Only last year there was a letter in the *New Statesman*,¹ under the title “Soul Snatching” in which the case of Littré was once more brought forward as an example of this alleged odious practice. The following account of Littré’s last days, which, to my knowledge, has never been published, should put an end to the accusations in this instance. But this is for Catholics a matter of little moment in comparison with the light thrown on the spirit and method of Abbé

¹. *The New Statesman*, August 21, 1926.

Huvelin's dealing with souls.

"M. Maximilien Paul Emile Littré, the Positivist Philosopher, born in 1801 (February 1), and died in 1881 (June 1).

"It was in 1884—in June—that I first saw Abbé Huvelin. I copy the following from the account which I wrote down after hearing it—on the same day that I heard it—and which was revised by the Abbé himself:¹

" M. Littré died in his eightieth year from physical exhaustion. But his intellectual faculties were never more vigorous or in finer order than during his last six months, and even up to the day of his death. His father had lived and died as an utter and avowed atheist; when, on his death-bed, his friends said to him '*Au revoir*,' he replied '*Adieu*.' His mother was a Protestant who hated everything Catholic. His wife was, and is, a fervent Christian.... M. Littré was master in his own house, so that nothing was done, or even could be done, in it without his consent.

"From his youth onwards, M. Littré had devoted himself to a life of hard and engrossing study; the irreproachable purity of his life was the admiration, and rightly so, of his contemporaries. He believed in scarcely anything but phenomena—in direct information acquired by means of the senses and consciousness.

"And yet, six months before his death, there arose in his soul—not as the result of the commission of fresh sin, or reflection on the sins of his past life—a deep, persistent, piercing sorrow for these sins of the past. This pain was not the result, it was, in matter of fact, the cause of his reflections. It became for him the occasion and the object of an interior and laborious effort, of such a prolonged and most profound analysis, that he devoted all the strength and thought of the last six months of his life to it.

"He began by striking out from the instructions in his will the paragraph providing for a civil burial, and substituting, in its stead, a

¹. What follows is translated from the French.

religious service; he then firmly shut his door on all, or nearly all, his former Positivist or unbelieving friends; finally, he sent for a priest, not with the intention of receiving the sacraments or of being instructed (because he was not ready for the reception of the sacraments, and he knew the Christian dogmas thoroughly), but that he might have someone to discuss with him each of the stages through which he was passing.

“He knew personally only two Catholic priests, and both of these through the scientific interests which they had in common: Father Milleriot, a Jesuit, and the Abbé Huvelin. The Jesuit was ill, so he had to send for the Abbé.

“The latter visited him almost daily during these last six months, always following after, and never anticipating, him; conversing with him on the conclusions and discoveries to which he was led by his analysis. During these six months M. Littré saw regularly only the Abbé Huvelin and M. Barthélémy de Saint Hilaire; of his other old friends he only saw M. Wgrouboff from time to time. That this was done in accordance with the express wish of M. Littré is proved by this circumstance, amongst others — namely, that, when the outer door of his room was opened for the Abbé, the latter often heard M. Littré ask, from his bed, who was there; and it was only after he had been assured it was the Abbé, that the latter was brought into the room. A few days before his death the Abbé heard M. Wgrouboff remark that he had never found M. Littré’s mind more clear or vigorous than on that very day.

“The following are some of the expressions M. Littré frequently repeated to the Abbé:

“‘I would wish to be in no wise such as I have been, and I would wish never to have committed a sin during my life.’

“‘No; what I feel is not what you call contrition; it is just simply heart-break.’

“This interior struggle went on in a very acute fashion with results that grew more visible daily; it would probably have taken only a few

months more to arrive at complete and explicit Christianity. But he had to come from a great distance; he worked according to his own slow and minute method. Consequently, up to the day of his death, he had not reached either Catholicism or Christianity, or even explicit Theism; if the Abbé had asked from him an explicit adhesion to the dogma of the Holy Trinity, or to that of the Divinity of our Lord, or even to the Personality of God, he would not have got it. Nevertheless, he did not die, like Mill, without faith, and with hope only. He already believed absolutely in the existence of the invisible world, and the survival of the soul. He would not, like his father, have said, 'Adieu'; he would certainly have said 'Au revoir.'

On the morning of the day of his death, Madame Littré noticed a change that alarmed her. She said to him: '*Mon ami*, you are dying; do you wish to be baptised?' M. Littré answered, 'Yes'; he had his daughter summoned, and had himself baptised in her presence. When the Abbé arrived that day, M. Littré was dead.

"M. Littré cannot be cited with fairness as an explicit witness to the truth of any dogma of the Church; he had not yet come to that. But he was the subject, and the fully conscious subject, of an interior and most real spiritual travail, of a most carefully analysed phenomenon due to God himself working on that sincere soul.

"The above are those passages of my report which the Abbé himself passed as essentially correct, and did not ask me not to communicate to others. On returning me my MS. thus corrected, he wrote me a letter, June 27, 1884, in which he says as follows:

"M. Littré had experience of an *interior fact*, a spiritual fact, which he, for a long time, regarded as an hallucination, but to the evidence of which he ended by surrendering. The observation of this fact brought him farther than he thought. Ever most sincere with himself, he did not wish to go a step beyond what he saw and felt.... To give an account of such a spiritual state is a very difficult matter."

* * * * *

This statement was drawn up by Baron Friedrich von Hügel, whose life was to be so much influenced by the words and example of the Abbé Huvelin. From his first meeting with the priest until the day of his death, it may be said that the memory of Abbé Huvelin was not long absent from Baron von Hügel's thoughts. This is clear from his writings and still more so from the contents of the recent volume of *Selected Letters*.¹ The veneration he felt for the Abbé seems to have grown deeper as the years went by, and in some of his last letters he refers to the priest as "my dear saint."

When von Hügel died in 1925 that portion of the press — and more especially of the non-Catholic press — interested in the philosophy of religion showed the high place accorded to the Baron as a religious thinker by those outside the Church. The publication of a second series of *Essays and Addresses*² after his death only served to deepen the impression. Catholic thinkers have also devoted attention to his writings and continued the task of discriminating between the permanently valuable elements of his thought and those eccentric and, at times, almost heterodox views, which may be found, for the most part, in his earlier productions, and which have made Catholics, as a body, adopt an attitude of marked reserve towards the publications of Baron von Hügel.

This attitude of Catholic and non-Catholic writers is well illustrated by two criticisms of his work which have recently appeared, during the same week, in the columns of the *Tablet*³ and *The Times Literary Supplement*.⁴ The writer in the *Supplement* begins: "Were we asked to name the Roman Catholic thinkers who have in modern times left an enduring mark on the religious mind of England, we should mention Newman and we should mention Friedrich von

^{1.} *Selected Letters of Baron Friedrich von Hügel*. London, J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1927.

^{2.} *Essays and Addresses*, second series. London, J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1926.

^{3.} *The Tablet*, May 14, 1927.

^{4.} *The Times Literary Supplement*, May 14, 1927.

Hügel, but no third without doubts and reservations.” The writer in the *Tablet*, by a coincidence, ends on the same note: “Thus convinced,” he states (that God works through the Church, surely guiding it in spite of the faults inevitable in an institution composed of human beings). “Baron von Hügel can afford to appraise good, no matter where he finds it, and it is this, conjoined with his deep philosophical insight, that gives to his apology a power, and to his writings an influence, greater perhaps than any that has been wielded by Catholics in this country since Newman.”

Each of the critics also deals with the question provoked by von Hügel’s relations with the Modernist movement. The Times critic says: “A doubt that persists when we lay the book down is whether, in the last resort, von Hügel assigns to the visible institution a relative or an absolute value.” The doubt arises from the fact that “if... we are to assume that von Hügel accepted the official theological view of the necessity and infallibility of the Church, his own reserves — as in the matter of Biblical criticism — are puzzling.”

The writer in the *Tablet* says: “Baron von Hügel is not a representative Catholic.” The grounds for this statement are that “his criticism of clerical officialism, even were it deserved, contrasts strangely with, while at the same time it is largely accounted for by, the ready acceptance accorded to the conclusions of non-Catholic scholars as to the historical basis of the Old and New Testaments.” Moreover, and in part arising out of such acceptance, “his account of the Church’s infallibility, in the first Essay, would not be acceptable to the theologian.”

The attitude of reserve on the part of Catholics is thus abundantly justified. It may be of interest to note that the Essay just referred to was written in 1904. When the Baron made a collection of his papers in 1921¹ he said, in the preface, that, “pending the reissue of *The Mystical Element of Religion*,” and “the completion and publication of a new large work on religious fundamentals,” he thought it well “to

¹. *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*, by Baron Friedrich von Hügel. London, J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1921.

publish in book form, from amongst my accumulated papers, such studies as appear to possess some abiding interest." Now the Essay in question was not admitted into this series, but appeared in the second set of *Essays and Addresses*, published some eighteen months after von Hügel's death.

The fact was noted in some of the obituary notices that von Hügel had moved away, as the century went by, from a position which might be termed Left Centre to a more orthodox position on the Right. There were many causes for this change. He saw, and noted with growing emphasis, the ravages produced, not merely in his own day, but during the past three centuries, by the spread of Subjectivism, Immanent Idealism, and the various fashionable forms of Pantheism. His published letters bear frequent testimony to the fact. Moreover, the subsequent career of some of his Modernist friends and acquaintances who left the Church, or had been excommunicated, after the publication of Pius X's Encyclical *Pascendi* on September 16, 1907, drove this conviction home. Men such as Buonaiuti, Murri, and Minocchi in Italy, Hebert, Houtin, and Loisy in France abandoned, not only the Catholic Church, but the idea of any supernatural religion. In a letter dated July 21, 1921, written to Professor René Guiran, he deprecated being ticketed a Modernist, and went on to say that the capital and decisive difference lies between a conception of religion as a purely non-evidential, "intra-human phenomenon without evidence outside the aspirations of the human race; and religion conceived as essentially evidential and metaphysical, the effect in us of something more than us, something more than any, no matter what, purely human facts and desires." He regrets that Loisy had lost this realist, evidential, metaphysical sense of religion, and is even caustic in his criticisms of some of that writer's later works on Scripture. In a brief note on *Les Évangiles Synoptiques* (1908) he says: "The introduction to the two synoptic volumes, though incredibly brilliant, is, for me, much less solid than the contents of these volumes. And even in the body of the work M. Loisy is already beginning to be too subtle, too certain about matters concerning which he lacks almost all the materials for a sound judgement. It already preludes the recent large volume on *The Acts of*

the Apostles, in which he knows, in amazing detail, the contents of writings that are, for him, purely hypothetical.”

Apart from these lessons of experience, Baron von Hügel was a humble-minded man who realised the dangers to which his intense, critical turn of mind exposed him. There is a moving instance of this in a letter dealing with the spiritual crisis through which his daughter Gertrud was passing in the winter of 1897–98. He had undertaken her religious and philosophical education, and in the course of it he unwittingly put her faith to a strain from which, indeed, she happily recovered. He writes: “I see increasingly plainly the triple fault and undermining influence of my character—the dwelling so constantly and freely on the detailed humanities in the Church; the drawing out and giving full edge to religious difficulties; the making too much of little intellectual and temperamental difficulties between myself and most Catholics, near relations included, so as to seriously weaken such influence as they might otherwise have had.... I know that Abbé Huvelin (I have written to him now, but have not yet heard) used to say that many might think G.’s troubles arose from simple pride, but that he found her very simple and often sweetly humble.”¹ He also quite realised that his writings were not suitable for everyone. On April 21, 1920, in a letter to a niece whose mind was sufficiently serious and mature to study, under the Baron’s direction, works such as the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix and the *Apologeticus* of Tertullian, he writes: “Yet I want to note this point for you—viz., that though I believe your *Confessions* and *Imitation* (with Psalms and N.T.) and the Church service do not strain you, nor, I think, my letters, written specially for yourself, I am not at all sure of my writings in this respect. I mean that they are the writings of, I believe, a masculine mind—that they contain far more sheer thinking than is suited to a woman. This is why I was slow to give or to lend you my writings.”² And, finally, in one of his last letters he wrote:

¹. *Selected Letters*, p. 9.

². *Ibid.*, p. 305.

“I saw that during the past fifty years it has been my life’s purpose to conduct myself scrupulously as a critical historian and uncompromising philosopher of religion; that my allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church cost me more than ten years of intense struggle and wrestling, precisely because, though I needed a large measure of freedom to carry out the task I had proposed to myself, I was beset by temptations to discard all the obligations of authority and seek complete freedom in individual effort; but that, finally, my fidelity to the Church saved me from scepticism and spiritual arrogance, being, when rightly understood and practised, completely reconcilable with the healthy freedom necessary to my studies. I am not, therefore, recommending something the price of which I do not know. This price is really so great that only a strong faith can pay it. But the reward is great—the greatest a soul can receive, or God by his grace can offer.”¹

The spiritual guidance of such a man presented a problem of great delicacy and difficulty. If he won through these temptations and preserved his fidelity to the Church, there is little doubt that, under God, he owed, in great part, his victory to the lessons and example of the Abbé Huvelin. During the week May 26–31, 1886, Baron von Hügel paid the priest a visit, and in the course of their conversations M. Huvelin pointed out certain principles and facts, and made suggestions as to the practice of the Catholic religion that were noted down by his disciple. In after years von Hügel would, at times, send a copy of these sayings to persons whom he thought they might help. In a letter to Professor Sonnenschein of April 18, 1916, he writes:

“I have copied out for you some of the advice and directions given me by Abbé Huvelin in 1886. I do this in so far with reluctance, as I am keenly aware how much less living and probing these, to me, winged words and fiery darts will come to anyone not in precisely the sore need I was in, at the time when all this, and much more, was said to me by one whose spiritual greatness and piercing vision

¹. The *Month*, June 1927, p. 560.

were already palpable facts for my experience.”¹

A study of these sayings will help one to realise the secret of M. Huvelin’s influence over Baron von Hügel. As a spiritual guide, the priest shows remarkable insight combined with much imaginative sympathy and a delicate sensitiveness, enlivened by flashes of humour, in his suggestions as to the moral and spiritual helps most suitable for the man who was looking to him for guidance.²

He recognises first of all that the Baron’s mind is of the solitary type: “You will find only very rarely souls who will understand you; and they will be strongly marked, individual souls who have themselves suffered much” (i). “You understand others remarkably well; you are in darkness about yourself...” (xii). “You will always do great good by being open with persons who are in sympathy with you. You will let them see that they are by no means alone in the world” (xvii).

The solitary type of personality is frequently morally austere; there is a tendency to self-repression for its own sake, and to self-hatred. Hence the advice: “Detachment should never be practised for its own sake; I practise detachment in order to become attached. I drop the bad, or the less good, in order to seize hold of the better or the perfect. I never let go merely to fall into a hole” (viii). And again: “As far as contrition is concerned, you should have a hatred of self, but it should be a calm, peaceful self-hatred that will come during prayer, in contrast with the sight of God, and such contrition should be general and not detailed” (xv).

The religious life of the austere and isolated man is usually characterised by a love of high and pure ideals, and on such an idealism the Abbé Huvelin sets his approval. “What is small can only be realised by contrast with what is great. You will never grow really humble save by dint of work. Never lower your ideal; keep raising it always. Do not look on your studies, your ideal, as a mere bagatelle.

¹. *Selected Letters*, p. 233.

². *Selected Letters*, pp. 58–62.

Observe the contrast between what you would like to do and what you effect" (xiii). Again: "Christianity has no deeper or more dangerous enemy than whatever tends to diminish it or make it narrow" (xxv). And with regard to the Church: "Yes, the Church is utterly positive, utterly independent. It is something very much greater than mere anti-Protestantism, mere anti-Rationalism. Converts often see only that element in her; it is only a very tiny surface of the truth that touches these negations which are so apparent to them. I, too, only look for, only see in others what unites them with us. Souls only live by the truth they possess; let us love this truth in them, let us help them to develop it—it will end by stifling error" (xxvii).

Of the elements that go to make up a full, harmonious religious life, the institutional, the intellectual, and the mystical, it was the latter which predominated in Baron von Hügel's personality. His great life's work, *The Mystical Element of Religion*, would almost of itself demonstrate the fact. Now such a type of mind tends to under-rate, to be impatient with the purely intellectual element of religion. The apparently hard, dry, clear-cut mind and spirit of the theologian is, almost of necessity, antipathetic to the mystically minded. Hence it is not very surprising that there is little direct evidence of a close study on von Hügel's part of the great masterpieces of Catholic theology, and a Catholic cannot but feel a certain incongruity in the Baron's expression of his gratitude to the German Protestant theologian, Ernst Troeltsch, for teaching him the originality of St Thomas Aquinas. It is a further subject for regret that, whilst von Hügel's writings and letters abound, and superabound, in references to or quotations from modern English, Scottish, German, and Scandinavian non-Catholic philosophers and religious thinkers, there is little or no evidence of any acquaintance with the scholarly and original work on subjects so deeply and permanently interesting to Baron von Hügel as the relations between the natural and supernatural, and the nature of mystical experience, produced during the last quarter of a century by Catholic philosophers of the calibre of Père Rousselot, S.J., Père Gardeil, O.P., and the two Jesuit Fathers, de Broglie and Maréchal. Bearing this in mind, and the Baron's own description of his nature as "very vehement, violent, and over-

impressionable," it is hard to refrain from judging that the next group of the Abbé's sayings laid themselves open to be overstrained in their application by Baron von Hügel. Moreover, the Abbé Huvelin himself was much more of a mystic than a theologian. The effects of the great revival in scholastic studies inaugurated by Leo XIII in 1880 had scarcely time to bear fruit, and the philosophy taught during M. Huvelin's youth and early manhood in the seminaries was a scholastic Cartesianism of a singularly logical and arid type. Yet even so it would be a mistake to accept these sayings as a full revelation of M. Huvelin's mind. The reader will have further opportunity of forming a more accurate judgement of the value attached by the Abbé to the study of scholastic theology.

To a question, "Do theologians make mistakes?" M. Huvelin replies: "I certainly think so—they do, and often. The experimental sciences have made great headway since theology came to a standstill" (ix). And "It would seem as if the scholastics have an esoteric language of their own, and that those who have not made such studies have no right to speak it. I myself did not make them. And hence they let me see that I have no right to talk. But I hold fast to realities and they to formulas. They do not observe that life, all life, escapes analysis. They dissect a corpse. That's not a very great affair. Pass them by with a smile, a very gentle smile" (vi).

"Truth in your case" he says, "is a luminous point that, little by little, fades into obscurity" (iii). And "You will never lose, you will never weaken your faith, if you always seek only *the* truth and never *your* truth... you may rest quite assured that if you only hold fast to an idea in the measure that it seems to you, without passion or personality, true, then God will always give you an intellectual light on your error, if you be in error" (xxvii). The remark reads like a gloss on St Augustine's saying, *Fac veritatem et videtis eam* {Do the truth, and you will see it}. Its true implication is not a contrast between "orthodoxy" and "religious experience," but a stressing of the idea that orthodoxy really means intellectual honesty in divine things. Heresy in the eyes of the Fathers and the great schoolmen is falsehood. The heretic is the man who has lied to God in his heart,

who has chosen, against conscience, the misleading and flattering lights of the “carnal man” in preference to the brightness infused by his Holy Spirit into the souls of men of good-will.

Abbé Huvelin did not fail to point out the dangers incidental to a man of Baron von Hügel’s temperament. “No,” he remarks, “you are not a ‘liberal Catholic.’ You are far more dogmatic than they were; you are very dogmatic. Moreover, they were interested in politics above all; politics means little or nothing to you” (xxix). Again: “You will often be tempted to explain everything by natural causes (*le physique*). The very simple explanation of this fact is that you are an invalid. It’s much the same thing in the case of doctors: disease is what both of you primarily and constantly observe” (xlv). Yet, in spite of this, “You must work. You are an invalid, and hence there will always be a greater or lesser touch of the unhealthy in the form of your activity. But don’t be afraid: work, live; you have an infinite need of expansion; constraint kills you.” And whilst he should avoid all unnecessary causes of irritation such as, in von Hügel’s case, reading religious journals or attending conferences or meetings, still he must allow others to go their own way. “Do not try to force others to see things as you do; you will never succeed in doing so. God makes use of everything; I have often heard sermons that might have done me much harm, and yet I have observed the excellent effects they produced on a large number of those who heard them” (xix). And again: “Never forget this: the majority has its rights also—the right to your silence, to your discretion, to your respect. Why try to change others? Why try to get them to understand you? You will never succeed in doing either the one or the other” (xxv). And, finally, there is no safe rule for a man engaged, like von Hügel, in critical studies, save: “Pray, avoid obstinacy—that is all” (iv).

Prayer, indeed, and the part that prayer must take in the life of his hearer is a topic to which the priest constantly returns. “The religion you require,” he says, “is a beautiful religion, a wholly beautiful religion; its beauty is what will always hold you. It is only the pure essence of Christianity which keeps and will keep you in the Church. That’s a very good sign” (xii). “There were saints,” he remarks, “and

very great saints, who were attracted in the same way as you are. For example, St Francis of Assisi"; and then, with a twinkle: "I don't mean Franciscans." "There is a saint all life, all light, movement, and warmth" (xx). With the *Canticle of the Sun*, perhaps, in his mind, he tells von Hügel: "The spirit for you is a spirit of benediction for every creature" (xxx). But this spirit of benediction is not a spirit of unalloyed joy. "It is a note of your spiritual state to feel more grief in church than elsewhere. In my own case, Holy Week is the most sorrowful week of the year, and the saddest moments of the day are during Mass from the Consecration to the Communion. You should very quietly humble yourself and be very patient with yourself. Religion in your case becomes very easily a matter of too much detail—too intense. Recollection, indeed spiritual things in general, escape in proportion as you pursue them. It is just like water gliding from beneath your feet" (xvi). And although "prayer in your case will be rather a state than a series of definite, deliberate acts," still the priest gave him a very definite set of instructions to which the Baron referred thirty years later in an address on *The Facts and Truths concerning God and the Soul which are of Most Importance in the Life of Prayer*.¹ "Let me illustrate," he said, "what I mean from my own direct experience. After practising a daily three-point meditation for some twenty-five years, the new helper sent me by God advised me that my prayer should now be mainly informal—more of the prayer of quiet type; but that there always should remain short, vocal prayers morning and night, Mass and Holy Communion twice a week, with confession once a week or once a fortnight; and (perhaps most characteristic point of all) one decade of the Rosary every day—this especially to help prevent my interior life losing touch with the devotion of the people. After over thirty years of this mixed régime I am profoundly convinced of the penetrating sagacity of this advice."

Another lesson which he learned from his director and never forgot was the need of mortification and suffering as essential

¹. *Essays and Addresses*, second series, p. 234.

elements in the spiritual life. To judge from his letters, some of his non-Catholic friends seem to have been surprised at his insistence on this point. He always took care to note that, though suffering is not a good in itself, yet it is an element that cannot be eliminated from the Christian life. "The man," he said, "who laughs at the plank bed and the discipline is a shallow fool." M. Huvelin had warned him that "It is not what you give but what you retain that will cause you suffering" (xii), and "Allow others to make you suffer, but do you never cause them suffering" (xi). And, finally, suffering and sanctity go together: "Ah! yes, quite so; you need not go any farther. Holiness and suffering are the same thing. You will never do any good to others save in and by suffering. Our Lord gained the world, not by his discourses, the Sermon on the Mount, but by his blood, his sufferings on the Cross" (xxxii). Well might his disciple end a letter to one of his most intimate friends with the phrase, "*Per Crucem ad Lucent.*" {By the Cross, to the Light}

His published works bear evidence to the permanent effect of certain lessons taught him by his spiritual guide. In an address on *Responsibility in Religious Belief* he retells the story of Littré's conversion by way of warning against judging individuals who seem to ignore or even deny God.

"Some twenty years ago," he writes,¹ "a saintly French cleric was telling me his recent experiences at the death-bed of a Positivist of European renown. The man was in his seventies, and for a full half-century had organised and systematised the most aggressively negative of the followers and of the teachings of Auguste Comte—teachings which reduce all religion to purely human realities taken for more than human by a sheer mirage of the human mind. The cleric in question was then in the middle forties, a man of the finest mental gifts and training, and a soul of the deepest spirituality. He had been sitting, at the express invitation of the Positivist leader, almost daily for three months by the sick man, and had kept a most careful diary of all and everything from day to day. Nothing could be

¹. *Essays and Addresses*, first series, p. 3.

more emphatic than were this cleric's convictions that this Positivist had, three months before he called in the Abbé, been touched by a most real divine grace. A sudden, intense, persistent pain had been awakened in this philosopher's heart, without any doing of his own, a pain which, during the first three months, he had not succeeded in driving away as morbid, or in explaining away as an illusion. The pain was a pain for all the sins — this term alone was adequate — the sins of his entire past life. Again this same cleric had come to know, from the Positivist himself, during the remaining three months of his life, the general inner history of his busy past and the sorts of acts which now pained him; and this cleric could not but marvel at the innocence (according to ordinary standards) of a life adulated from youth upwards and which, until these three past months, had remained without misgivings as to the truth, the unanswerableness, the necessity, and the duty of his intensive, propagandist unbelief. The Positivist died, now explicitly sure of two things — that the pain was no fancy, but, on the contrary, the most genuine of intimations, the most real effect of realities and forces ignored by himself up to now; and again, that he was not going to cease in death, but, on the contrary, would then see the realities and forces of which he was now experiencing the effect. Still worshipped by the few whom he admitted to his presence, with half a century of intense virile labour and rare moral purity behind him, he was now dying broken-hearted (his own words), prostrate at the foot of that great altar-stair of real experiences which was now leading him back to that God from whom he came. On the last day of his life his devotedly Catholic wife, seeing death on his face, asked him whether he would like to be baptised (his militantly unbelieving parents had opposed all such 'superstition'), and he answered he would; he was consequently baptised shortly before he entered upon unconsciousness. But to the end this Positivist, if asked to affirm the Church, or Christ, or even simply God, would answer, 'Pray do not press me; not yet, not yet.' Apparently, then, a man can be in good faith, at least for many years, in the denial of even the rudiments of theism."

In an address delivered at Edinburgh on July 7, 1914, *On Certain*

Needs of Religion,¹ he takes up the position that Christianity is “centrally a religion of renunciation, of heroism,” and that “clerical celibacy is one of the forms of that renunciation, that asceticism, which in some kind and degree or other every religion, indeed every philosophy, at all deep and delicate must, and indeed does and will, revere, inculcate, or at least imply.” Here, too, he turns to the memory of Abbé Huvelin and the latter’s relations with the ex-Carmelite friar, Hyacinthe Loyson.

“A little scene, of the most authentic kind, is often, in this matter, vividly before my mind. There was the Abbé Huvelin—a rich and deep, a cultivated, above all an heroic soul, to whom I owe incalculably much. A man full of vitality, the strongest passions, and the deepest affections, the life of deliberate, irrevocable lifelong celibacy, entered upon by him in full manhood and with the clearest understanding of its meaning and range, was, I am very sure, profoundly costly. Yet he willed, used, and loved this renunciation as an instrument, condition, and price of the tenderest love of souls in God and of God in souls right on to his end, in the seventies of his age. And yet if, in 1872, the strongly Protestant Bishop Ewing could clearly see the mistake—at least, if he would still remain a leader in reform—of M. Loyson’s marriage, this saintly Roman Catholic cleric could, in 1909, when M. Loyson was broken-hearted at the death of his wife, see and feel the pathos of the old man’s bereavement, and could fly to him with all the tenderness and consolation which this rich heart knew so well how to find and to impart. Yet little as the Scotch Protestant would, even in face of M. Loyson’s trouble, have retracted his opinion as to the tactical ruinousness of this marriage, so little did the French Catholic relax his share of the heroic spirit of Christianity, and his deep regret that a priest and a friar had not somehow been able, or been willing, to hold out in the particular kind and degree of heroism he had at first undertaken, and to which the very best instincts in the best Roman Catholics rise in reverent respect and profound trust.” And in a paper already referred to on *Facts and Truths concerning the Soul* in illustration of his statement that “the

¹. *Essays and Addresses*, second series, pp. 94, 95, 96.

love of God, where uninhibited and full, brings joy—it seeks God, joy; and it finds joy, God,” he says: “I used to wonder in my intercourse with John Henry Newman, how one so good, and who had made so many sacrifices to God, could be so depressing. And again, twenty years later, I used to marvel contrariwise, in my intercourse with the Abbé Huvelin, how one more melancholy in natural temperament than even Newman himself, and one physically ill in many ways and degrees in which Newman never was, could so radiate spiritual joy and expansion, as, in very truth, the Abbé did. I came to feel that Newman had never succeeded in surmounting his deeply predestinarian, Puritan training; whilst Huvelin had nourished his soul, from boyhood upwards, on the Catholic spirituality as it flowered in St Francis. Under the fine rule by which the Roman Church tribunals require, for Canonisation as distinct from Beatification, that the servant of God concerned should be proved to have possessed and to have transmitted a deep spiritual joy, Newman, I felt and feel, could be beatified, but only Huvelin could be canonised.”¹

Finally, the fullest account of von Hügel’s relations with Abbé Huvelin is given in the following extract from *Eternal Life*:

“And for deep spirituality and heroism in the Roman Catholic Church the present writer’s mind dwells ever especially upon four examples”—three of these are Father Damien, the Curé d’Ars (St John Baptist Vianney) ... Eugénie Smet (Mother Mary of Divine Providence)—“and, finally, there is before my mind, with all the vividness resulting from direct personal intercourse and deep spiritual obligations, the figure of the Abbé Huvelin, who died only in 1910. A gentleman by birth and breeding, a man of exquisitely piercing, humorous mind, he could readily have become a great editor or interpreter of Greek philosophical or patristic texts, or a remarkable Church historian. But this deep and heroic personality deliberately preferred ‘to write in souls’ whilst occupying, during thirty-five years, a supernumerary, unpaid post in a large Parisian

¹. *Essays and Addresses*, second series, p. 242.

parish. There, suffering from gout in the eyes and brain, and usually lying prone in a darkened room, he served souls with the supreme authority of self-oblivious love, and brought light and purity and peace to countless troubled, sorrowing, or sinful souls. His Curé, of St Augustin, has spoken well of this great figure; Adeline, Duchess of Bedford, a devoted Anglican, has published a vivid, and almost entirely accurate, sketch of him; and now three volumes have been issued containing the careful reports, taken down by certain of his hearers, of familiar addresses which are full (at least for those who knew and loved the saintly speaker) of sudden gleams of the deepest spiritual insight and love.

Thus, in the *Conferences on Some of the Spiritual Guides of the Seventeenth Century* he says, in connection with St Francis de Sales: "When once we desire a thing to be true, we are very near finding it true"; and "a spirituality of the little-by-little is not an enfeebled spirituality." And, in criticism of Jansenism: "There exist families of souls which are determined to find the principle of tranquillity within their own selves; they want to cast anchor within their own depths. But we have to cast anchor, not below, but above; it is in God, in his goodness, that we have to found our hope." And finally: "God, who might have created us directly, employs, for this work, our parents, to whom he joins us by the tenderest ties. He could also save us directly, but he saves us, in fact, by means of certain souls, which have reached the spiritual life before ourselves, and which communicate it to us, because they love us."

Of Père de Condren, Abbé Huvelin says: "He has hardly written any books; he wrote in souls"; "he experienced great interior derelictions and strange obscurities—a man is not called to form other souls without having to suffer much"; and "his call was not to live for himself, but to live utterly for him who gave him all things."

In speaking of M. Olier, M. Huvelin exclaims: "Strip yourself of self, love God, love men; what are all those other things that seem of such importance to you?" And he declares: "The world sees, in this or that soul, the passions, the bitter waters, the little spring of sweet waters, Arethusa, that little thread of grace, which, though deeper

down and more hidden, is nevertheless most truly there.” And again: “The true means to attract a soul is not to attenuate Christian doctrine, but to present it in its full force, because we then present it in its beauty. For beauty is one of the proofs of truth.”

As to St Vincent de Paul, he tells us: “See the reason why, in the life so devoted to his fellow-creatures, you will find something austere, and shut up in God; it is that the saint feels the necessity, for himself and for others, thus to reimmerge, to temper anew his soul in the source of all love.”

And, lastly, with respect to the great Trappist, Abbé de Rancé, he observes: “When something very high and inaccessible is put before human nature it feels itself impelled to attain to that height, by something mysterious and divine which God infuses into the soul.” And: “There is ever something mysterious in every conversion; we never succeed in fully understanding even our own”; nevertheless, “the voice of God does not speak in moments of exaltation. Such converted souls would say: ‘It was in the hour when I was most mistress of myself, most recollected, least agitated, that I heard the voice of God.’”

Thus souls, who live an heroic spiritual life within great religious traditions and institutions, attain to a rare volume and vividness of religious insight, conviction, and reality. They can, at their best, train other souls, who are not all unworthy of such training, to a depth and tenderness of full and joyous union with God, the Eternal, which utterly surpasses, not only in quantity, but in quality, what we can and do find amongst souls outside all such institutions, or not directly taught by souls trained within such traditions. And thus we find here, more clearly than in any philosopher as such, that Eternal Life consists in the most real of relations between the most living of realities—the human spirit and the Eternal Spirit of God; and in the keen sense of his Perfection, Simultaneity, and Prevenience, as against our imperfection, successiveness, and dependence. And we find that this sense is awakened in, and with, the various levels of our nature; in society as well as in solitude; by things as well as by persons. In such souls, then, we catch the clearest glimpses of what,

for man even here below, can be and is Eternal Life.”¹

Tributes such as these manifestly come from persons who revered and loved the Abbé Huvelin. It may be doubted if they as fully understood him. Between the Duchess of Bedford and the Abbé lay the obstacles to entire comprehension that arise from differences of sex, race, and religion. The latter hindrance did not exist, of course, between M. Huvelin and Baron von Hügel, but, none the less, the strong, subtle ties that bind together men of the same race and country were, of necessity, wanting. There were no such hindrances in the case of the most remarkable of his spiritual children, Charles de Foucauld. The account now about to be given of that relationship is based on M. René Bazin’s work, *Charles de Foucauld*,² and *Écrits Spirituels de Charles de Foucauld*.³ The account is full, perhaps too full, involving as it does a certain amount of repetition of details that have already been noted. It may possibly be justified by the intrinsic interest of Père de Foucauld’s character, and by the fact that, as the same details are noted by three such different observers, a certain unity of impression concerning the personality of Abbé Huvelin may be thus arrived at. Should this be the case, and M. Huvelin thereby be better known and loved, there will be less need for apology.

Charles de Foucauld was born at Strasbourg on September 15, 1858. He came of an old Périgord family that had numbered men of note in Church and State for several hundred years. Both his father and mother died when he was six years old, and he was brought up, and spoiled in the process, by his maternal grandfather, M. Charles Gabriel de Morlet, a retired Colonel of Engineers.

He went to school at Nancy in 1872, and very soon abandoned the practice of the Christian religion. As he was too lazy to work for entrance to the military School for Engineers he spent two years at the Jesuit school in the Rue des Postes, Paris, with a view to entering the military college of Saint-Cyr. In 1876 he passed into that college,

¹. *Eternal Life*, by F. von Hügel (Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1913), pp. 374–378.

². *Charles de Foucauld*, by René Bazin (Paris, Plon, 1921).

³. Paris, de Gigord, 1925.

last on the list, a position he also occupied when he left it two years later. Some of his companions at Saint-Cyr were destined to be known to the world forty years later, for Generals Mazal, Durbal, and Marshal Petain were of his year, and Generals Maud'huy, Sarraill and Driant were his seniors by one year.

From Saint-Cyr he passed to the Cavalry School at Saumur, and from thence, in November, 1879, to Pont-à-Mousson, where the 4th Hussars, his regiment, were quartered. In the following year the regiment was ordered to Algeria, and very shortly after his arrival there he was ordered by his Colonel either to give up a young woman who had accompanied him from France or leave the regiment. He refused to dismiss her, and was ordered back to France. Early in 1881 a revolt of some of the desert tribes broke out in Southern Algeria. It was a "holy war," of much the same type as the Mahdi was preaching in the Sudan, and de Foucauld applied for permission to rejoin his regiment, promising to carry out whatever conditions the authorities might impose. He returned to Africa and took part in the campaign, showing, as a soldier, great energy, endurance, and courage. The only trace of his earlier days was a dainty edition of *Aristophanes*, which he always carried about with him. When the campaign was over he applied for leave to travel into the interior, and on permission being refused he handed in his papers. He at once set about preparing to explore Morocco and went to Algiers, where he met a distinguished old scholar, Oscar MacCarthy, an Irishman, who had thoroughly explored Algeria, and had for years been planning to cross the Sahara to Timbuctoo. He gave de Foucauld lessons in Arabic and Hebrew, and instructions on Jewish customs, as he considered it was hopeless to attempt the journey save in the disguise of a Musulman or a Jew, and of the two he favoured the latter.

De Foucauld, accompanied by a Jew, set out in May, 1883, from Tangier to explore the interior of Morocco. He worked down towards the south-west, and crossing the Atlas ranges, penetrated as far south as Akka. He then struck north-east, passing through the Rif country, and reached French territory in June, 1884. The journey had been undertaken with a scientific object, and Mr. Budget-Meaken

says that "it was the most important and remarkable journey undertaken by a European in Morocco for a century or more." On his return he remained for a few months in Algeria, and then paid a brief visit to France. In 1885 he returned to Africa, and made another journey across Southern Algeria, travelling from west to east. In February, 1886, he was back in Paris, and set about writing a book on his travels.

One evening he met, by chance, Abbé Huvelin at his aunt's — Madame Moiterner. The priest had long been intimate with several members of the de Foucauld family. As this former student of the École Normale was a very simple, humble man of prayer and a mystic, he made a deep impression on the man who was one day to resemble him. What was said that evening ?

It is quite certain that the Abbé made no attempt to shine. If he were witty, it was because he could not help being so. Moreover, a friendship such as was now about to be established between the priest and Charles de Foucauld does not spring from witty remarks, a display of talent, or a determination to be the victor. An unbeliever and loose liver stood face to face with a man who was not only chaste and had the faith, who was the incarnation of prayer, and of pity for the boundless weakness and sorrows of mankind, but who was, perhaps, something even more than that, for it was said the Abbé was one of those victims who offer themselves in secret to God to suffer for the sake of others, to repair the evil they have done, and to mitigate the punishment they have deserved.¹ The two men may have exchanged only a few common-place remarks, met and exchanged glances five or six times in the course of the evening, but it was enough. They recognised each other, they awaited each other; each of them, in his heart, regarded this meeting as momentous. One of them thought, "You are religion itself." The other said to himself: "My unhappy brother, I am only a poor creature, but my God is most gentle, and is seeking for your soul to save it." They did

¹. One of his maxims was: "We do good much less by what we say or do than by what we are."

not forget one another.

In 1886 Abbé Huvelin was not an old man, though he appeared to be so; the penitential life which he had led from his youth, and which had provoked the smiles or annoyance of his fellow-students at the École Normale, the weariness arising from the fact that he was, and had put himself at, the mercy of anyone who sought consolation in his grief, of those who were in difficulties and were seeking a solution of them, all this combined with illness—a sort of general rheumatic condition—which had already caused him much suffering, had left him only the youthfulness of a mind that was ever on the alert and a heart that was always sympathetic. His head was bent over his shoulder, his face lined with wrinkles, and walking was often a regular torture to him. The curate of St Augustine's had a terrifying flock of penitents in Paris, an immense correspondence, and, what made life still more difficult, the reputation of being a saint.

Souls are attracted most powerfully by holiness. At the conferences on the history of the Church given by him, from 1875 onwards, to young persons his holiness had been quickly perceived. In spite of his protests, he had seen many women and men, whose youth had long gone by, mingling in the crypt with the young people for whom the conferences were intended. He also preached in the church, and there were crowds to listen to a man who was not repeating a piece of recitation or trying to astonish, but who improvised on a theme that had been carefully studied, who gave easy and natural expression to an over-flowing mind, who was prudent in his doctrine, bold in the choice of words needed to convey his meaning, rich in reminiscences from history and literature, a man of digressions, parentheses, exclamations, and unexpected touches, but who was, above all, a man with a long experience of the world and of being merciful towards others. Hence he was in close touch with his hearers, a trusted and beloved friend. His pity, one may even say his tenderness, for sinners moved the most careless. There was a feeling that he wished them to be better just that they might be happier, and that he had ever before his mind, what they

themselves least thought of, the destined moment when they were to appear before God to be judged and condemned, wretched in that they had not even the hope of death, for there is no death — no, not for a moment; there are only two lives.

Abbé Huvelin's boundless zeal, all that he did, the visits he paid and received, his immense correspondence — brief, lucid, affectionate notes — his austerities, redoubled at times, of which there was proof, even though there was no exact knowledge of their causes, are all explained by this love for souls in peril.

There was another, and a very powerful, motive for consulting him at once: he was acquainted with human suffering. He sympathised with it; no matter what shape it took, he had already had experience of it, he had met it, given ear to it, and solaced it. Its face was never strange to him. Simplifying and stripping a phrase of Bossuet's of its seventeenth-century grandeur, he said of human suffering: "Sorrow has a charm of its own." And thus he defined the Church. "The Church," said he, "is a widow." Another saying of his to a lady of fashion was:

"I found out the way to be happy long ago."

"What was it?"

"To put joy aside."

But to understand the point and penetrating power of his sayings some more should be given, and I will give them just as I have heard them from one of his hearers; the tone of the speaker may be detected in them. It will not be a mere snippet because we are now dealing with the priest who was about to convert Charles de Foucauld and transform him into Père de Foucauld.¹

"Jesus is the Man of Sorrows because he is the Son of Man and man is sorrow. Sorrow accompanies us from the cradle to the grave; it purifies, it ennobles, and it lends us a charm. Since it is our inseparable companion, Jesus wished it to be his.

¹. I owe this precious quotation to the Viscount de Montmorand.

“Great souls — they are needed to honour humanity, by reproducing the states of Jesus Christ — have asked for and desired sorrow. They have repeated the *Fac me tecum plangere* {Let me weep with you} of the *Stabat Mater*. We have no such ambition. All that we ask for is to welcome sorrow when it comes to us with contrition and resignation.

“Far from us, above all, be these petty griefs, more intolerable than great sorrows, these contemptible wounds, so burning, so envenomed, which are produced by the passions and by self-love. It is a disgrace to humanity that it suffers so much from such trifles. *Jesus in the Garden of Olives*. He is sorrowful unto death. The Apostles do not understand his sorrow; that divine sorrow is too far above them. To understand it one must know the meaning of sin. And they do not know that, nor can we. He does not take up the *Greek* attitude towards sorrow. He does not dominate it. He does not say, as a Stoic would: ‘Sorrow, thou art but a name.’ Ah! No. Sorrow invades his heart at every pore; his soul is inundated by it; it has risen like the sea and overflowed the summits.

“He prays, but his prayer is not an effortless movement, a simple outpouring, of the soul; nor is it a flow of beautiful ideas; it is a sob, a sob that ends with an Amen. So be it. That is his whole prayer. His human will, hitherto united with the will of his Father, is now, for the first time, not at one with it. The weight is too heavy: ‘Father, if it be possible, remove this chalice from me.’

“He looks for help from his Apostles! He finds them asleep. When a man longs for a heartfelt word of sympathy, he is left alone with his grief. Friends only come when things are calm, or, if they do come during the storm, they do not know what to say; they hurt us by their tactlessness or their stupidity. Such were the friends of Job.

“At last an angel comes to strengthen him: *Angelus confortavit eum*. To strengthen, not to console. Grace, of its essence, is a strengthening, and not a consolation.”

I cannot quote further without transgressing my limits. What the reader has just seen and what I have already said are enough to

make us understand why all human miseries, all human doubts and repentances turned naturally to Abbé Huvelin. He heard confessions at St Augustine's, and received many visitors in his rooms. What a quick and powerful mind must not this crippled invalid have had to be able to picture in succession all the problems of a moral order that were laid before him, to study and solve them in a moment! But he was gifted with such sound judgement that he unravelled all these problems, and with such penetrating vision into the most hidden dispositions of those who sought his advice, that many have attributed this power to a special grace given him by God. There are even instances cited of his alluding to past and secret events in the lives of his penitents. His recommendations were simple, clear, and sensible, and he did not vary them. He accommodated them to the persons with whom he had to deal. He did not treat bears as he treated swallows. He was heard to say more than once that "there are some souls who should be told, 'You must do that.' There is a vigour in the Church's laws which those who despise them take more account of than is supposed." As a rule this great expert in spiritual direction was to be found at his rooms in the afternoon. Persons of every age and of every class in society, Parisians and foreigners, might have been met with in his little waiting-room. They were admitted in turn to his room, littered with books and papers, where M. Huvelin sat with a cat on his knee, resigned both to sickness and the crowd. Visitors who had been presented to him were sure of being remembered, even though many years had passed. He listened, devoting the whole of his attention to the visitor, and as he was brief himself he wished others to be the same. Although cheerful by nature, he was often seen to shed tears; he suffered from all the sorrows that were brought to him, from all the sins he listened to and absolved from, from all that he divined within the heart. Such was the priest, eminent in holiness—that is to say, in the knowledge of God and men—whom Charles de Foucauld met one afternoon towards the close of this summer.

On an October evening in the course of one of those family gatherings in which heart and mind are opened freely, when the children are playing around the tables before going to bed, one of his girl

cousins said to Charles: "It seems as if Abbé Huvelin were not going to resume his conferences; I am very sorry indeed that he is not." "So am I," said Charles, "because I meant to attend them." She made no reply. A few days after he said gravely to this same cousin: "You are happy in your faith; I am seeking for light and cannot find it."

Between October 27 and 30, on the day after this avowal, Abbé Huvelin saw a young man enter his confessional at St Augustine's. The man did not kneel down; he just bent over and said: "Father, I have not the faith; I have come to ask you to instruct me." M. Huvelin looked at him. "Kneel down, confess to God; you will believe." "But I did not come to confess." "Make your confession." He wished to believe, and felt that, in his case, forgiveness was a condition of his receiving light. He knelt down and made a confession of his whole life. When the Abbé saw his penitent stand up after receiving absolution, he resumed: "Are you fasting?" "Yes." "Go to Holy Communion at once." And Charles de Foucauld approached the holy table and made his "second first communion."

There was no marked change in his outer life. He attended Mass daily, went frequently, and after some time daily, to Holy Communion, and, for the rest, went on with the preparation of his book for the press. Towards the end of 1887 and the beginning of 1888 his two books, *Journeys in Morocco* and *A Moroccan Expedition*, were published, and had a great success. Towards the end of the year he paid a visit to the Holy Land, and at Nazareth a saying of Abbé Huvelin's was borne in on him: "Our Lord took the lowest place in such a way that no man since has been able to take it from him." And the rest of his life was to be affected by and modelled on his memories of Nazareth.

He was back in Paris early in 1889, and after a year's prayer and reflection made up his mind to be a Trappist monk. He did so after having consulted his director, who had then no presentiment of the extraordinary future that lay before his penitent. When he entered the monastery of Notre Dame des Neiges in the Ardèche he asked to be sent, after six months' novitiate, to a poor and remote house of

the order of Akbés in Syria, where he arrived in the early summer of 1890. He made his profession on February 2, 1892, and was shortly afterwards told he was to study for the priesthood.

The idea of becoming a priest made him uneasy, and he wrote to Abbé Huvelin: "If they speak to me about studies, I shall point out to them that I have a decided preference for remaining up to the neck in corn and wood, and an extreme aversion from anything that might tend to remove me from that lowest place which I have come here to seek, from that state of abjection into which I more and more wish to sink, after the example of our Lord ... and then, in the end, I will obey ... but all that I have been saying to you is trespassing on forbidden ground, and is it not enough that God is always with us ?"

He was ordered to begin his studies for the priesthood, and his professor was a Father Destino, the superior of a neighbouring Vincentian community. He writes to the Abbé on August 22, 1892: "The Vincentian father, who is the superior at Akbés, is coming back next week.... It would look as if it had been settled over a year ago that he is to teach me theology; he was a professor of theology at Montpellier, and is a very learned man.... He is a Neapolitan." He was interested in the study of dogmatic theology and the Scriptures, but had not much taste for moral theology. As time went by he felt urged to seek a more austere life. He consulted his confessor, and at the same time wrote to the Abbé Huvelin. The letters are lost, but he made a résumé of them in a sort of diary destined for a friend....

The Abbé Huvelin, who knew his penitent intimately and loved him, began to grow uneasy. Though he had not the faintest hope of retaining this man of boundless desires in La Trappe, this neophyte in whom he noticed a sort of restless search after perfection, still he tried to retard the climax of the spiritual crisis. The idea that Charles de Foucauld was perhaps called to follow the vocation of the Fathers of the Desert gradually took possession of his mind, but before being fully persuaded of it or mentioning the fact to anyone else he felt obliged to oppose a plan that had the appearance of an adventure, and an adventure of such a nature, as he well knew, that the noblest and most gifted souls may rush into, and that in perfect good faith,

but yet only to their own destruction. Here are a few fragments from letters written during the months that followed de Foucauld's avowal. They show how his tender heart was affected by an event the shadow of which he saw approaching as a storm-cloud.

January 29, 1894. — "Continue your studies in theology, at any rate as far as deaconship; apply yourself to the practice of the interior virtues and, above all, to the practice of the annihilation of self; as for external virtues, practise them according to the perfection of obedience prescribed by the rule and by your superior; and as for the rest, time will show. Finally, you are not made, you certainly are not made, to be a guide for others."

July 29, 1895 (to a third person). — "It is clear he will not remain there. He will come more and more to accept his own ideas as the voice of God speaking to him. The beauty of the end to which he believes himself called will veil all the rest, and it will be a veil over what can never be realised."

July 30, 1895 (to a third person). — "How dismayed I feel about the life he wishes to lead, about Nazareth, where he wishes to go and live, and about the community he wishes to gather round him."

The idea de Foucauld had submitted to Abbé Huvelin was to give up his life in La Trappe and live in Nazareth "as a servant or day labourer attached to some convent" (March 19, 1896). He had, however, determined to make no change whatever until he received permission from both his superiors and M. Huvelin. "As long as I have not my director's permission I should believe that I was disobeying God by doing anything whatsoever.... Abbé Huvelin tells me to try if I cannot find out what God wishes me to do here and in the state of life that I am now leading ... you know the respect and tenderness with which I listen to him; and yet everything calls me in an opposite direction.... Time or death, but, in any case, God will settle it. However, I never cease to hope that he will permit me to follow him along the road he is pointing out to me." Days and months went by, and at length came Abbé Huvelin's unexpected consent to his departure from La Trappe.

ABBÉ HUVELIN

“Paris,

“June 15, 1896.

“MY DEAR CHILD,

“I have read and re-read your letter. I have kept you waiting a long time for an answer, even though you were so anxious to have it! But I believed you were not losing time in the study of theology and by these studies acquiring sure and broad data, so that your mind and heart might be prepared for a mysticism that is safe and without illusions.

“I hoped, my dear child, that you would find what you seek for in La Trappe, that you would there find sufficient poverty, humility, and obedience to enable you to follow our Lord’s life as he lived it at Nazareth. I believed you would be able to say as you entered La Trappe, *Haec requies mea in saeculum saeculi* {“This is my rest for ever and ever’, Ps 131:4}! I still regret that the attraction towards another ideal is too strong, and that by the strength of its force you have come, little by little, to feel that you are not at home there, and are now ready to cross its threshold. Mention this fact to your superiors there, and also to those at Staoüeli. Tell them quite simply what are your ideas. At the same time tell them how profoundly you esteem the life you observe around you, and the invincible attraction you have so long felt, in spite of all you can do, for another ideal.... Not that I think you are called to a higher state ... I do not see you in a higher state. Ah, no, I see that you feel you are called elsewhere. And hence I shall not ask you to wait any longer.

“Show them this letter, then, and tell them what you think. Write to Staoüeli. I should have liked so much for you to remain in a home where you are loved, and to which you might have contributed so much. I believe, my child, that you have been well trained and directed at La Trappe; but you see something different and you cannot see otherwise. Oh! how I pray for you! ... I am twenty-nine years a priest today! How I should have loved to see you too a priest!”

De Foucauld then submitted a scheme for a new religious order in the hope that his director might approve of it, but Abbé Huvelin thus wrote to a friend of the project: “I have just received his letter.

Along with it there is a long rule for communities of the Little Brethren of Jesus which it is hoped may be founded. It is an impossible rule containing everything else except discretion. I am broken-hearted.”

And in his reply to Charles de Foucauld he was firm and direct.

“Fontainebleau,
“August 2, 1896.

“If your superiors ask you to make another attempt, do so loyally! What would frighten me beyond anything else, my dear child, is not the life you are thinking of leading yourself, provided you remain alone, but to see you establishing, or thinking of establishing, something else.... Your rule is absolutely impracticable ... the Pope hesitated about approving the rule of St Francis; he thought it too severe, and as for your rule! To tell you the truth, it frightened me! Live at the gates of a monastery in the lowly state you desire, but do not, I beg of you, draw up this rule....”

So there was to be no foundation and no community. Charles de Foucauld was to appear henceforth in the eyes of the priest who knew souls so well as a born solitary. Just one permission was granted him: he could make an attempt at living, outside the walls of La Trappe, an utterly hidden life in some far-off corner or other of Syria or Palestine. He would still have to submit to the trial of obedience and study which his superiors had, doubtless, in store for him before giving their consent to such a unique undertaking. But Abbé Huvelin no longer hesitated about the chief point in his vocation, the attraction for a life of utter solitude, and he repeated: “Yes, my dear child, I, too, like you, see the East.”

He wrote for a dispensation to the Father General of the order, who told him to go to Staouëli and wait there for instructions. Here he learned on October 12, 1896, that he was to go to Rome to continue his studies, and he arrived there in November. The Father General called together his council in January, 1897, to decide on what was to be done, and de Foucauld wrote to a friend on January 15:

“I gave him a written account of my spiritual state; he then

summoned his council, and in the presence of God, with only the divine will in view, the Father General and all the members of the council unanimously declared that God was calling me to a special life of poverty and humiliation, and that I should enter on it without delay. Hence I am about to get a dispensation, and every opportunity will be given me for following out the call of God at once. Our good Father General told me so yesterday. He also told me that he believed I should remain under obedience, as far as the question of vocation is concerned, but that in this and all other matters the best plan would be for me not to consult him but the Abbé. I wrote to him yesterday evening. As soon as I have heard from him I will set out. You know I want to be a servant in some monastery in the East. The Abbé will tell me which, and I will go there."

"My dear child," replied M. Huvelin, "I should be afraid to send you to another Trappist monastery, and yet that is where I should love to see you. You would have the same ideas, and make the same comparisons between the life there and that which you seek after. I prefer Capharnaum or Nazareth or any Franciscan convent; not to live in the convent itself, but beside it, asking only for its spiritual help and living in poverty at its gates. Do not think of gathering souls about you, or, above all, of giving them a rule. I am very clear on that point. I am filled with admiration at the kindness and simplicity of the Father General and at the charity of the good fathers who love you and are bidding you good-bye. I am touched by the way they have acted towards you."

On March 5, 1897, Charles de Foucauld arrived at Nazareth to begin a new stage in his pilgrim's progress. He had spent seven years of his life as a Trappist, and, on leaving the order, the Abbot of Staoüeli, who had been his superior at Akbés, wrote: "His departure has been the greatest grief of my life." De Foucauld, on his side, experienced nothing but gratitude for all that had been done for him by his religious brethren, and feelings of profound admiration for the work and spirit of the order.

He was accepted by the Abbess of the Poor Clares at Nazareth as an outdoor servant, and in accordance with his own wishes lived in a

wooden hut that had served as a tool-shed. He kept up a correspondence with Abbé Huvelin, and in a diary which he kept of his meditations he thus speaks of all the priest had been to him in an enumeration of the graces bestowed on him by God:¹

“The fourth grace was the incomparable one of his sending me to the Abbé Huvelin to teach me religion. By sending me to his confessional on one of the last days of October—I think it was between the 27th and the 30th—thou didst give me every good gift, O my God; if there is joy in heaven for a sinner who does penance, then there was joy when I entered his confessional.... What a happy day! What a day of benedictions!... Ever since then my whole life has been a succession of graces. Thou didst place me beneath the wings of a saint, and I have remained there. By his hands thou hast borne me up, and I have received nothing but graces and graces. I asked him for religious instruction; he made me kneel down and go to confession, and he sent me to Holy Communion immediately afterwards.... And after that, O my God, there was nothing but a stream of grace ever mounting up—an ever-rising tide; spiritual direction, and such direction! Prayer, spiritual reading, frequent communion at the end of a few weeks, his spiritual guidance becoming more and more intimate and frequent, enveloping my whole life, and making it a life of obedience, and obedience to such a master! The tender and ever-growing love for you, my Lord Jesus, the love of prayer, the faith on your word, the profound sense of the need for alms-giving, the desire of being united with you, the remark of Abbé Huvelin’s during a sermon that you took the lowest place in such a way that no one would ever be able to take it away from you, a saying indelibly imprinted on my heart....

In prayer, meditation, and in menial employments he spent three years at Nazareth, varied only by an occasional journey to the Holy Places. In the month of June, 1898, he was sent by the Abbess to Jerusalem, and he remained there, leading the same sort of life at a convent of Poor Clares. Some months later the superioress of this

¹. *Écrits spirituels de Charles de Foucauld*, p. 81, etc.

convent urged him to become a priest, and Charles de Foucauld told her to write to the Abbé Huvelin on the matter. At this time he conceived a plan of purchasing a property on the summit of the hill traditionally associated with the Sermon on the Mount and of establishing a community there. In the spring of 1899 he was back at Nazareth communicating with his director, who had long wished him to be a priest. At length he resolved on taking Holy Orders, though he did not abandon the idea of leading the life of a solitary. The plan of purchasing the Mount of Beatitudes fell through, and on the question of the community Abbé Huvelin was inflexible. The priest was, of course, well aware that he was dealing with an extraordinary vocation, and hence he did not give a formal refusal. "I am not sufficiently enlightened, my child," he wrote, "to give you a decision on the subject; I see only objections to the plan, and at the back of your piety and devotion I fear self-will."

Abbé Huvelin continued to encourage him to prepare for the priesthood. He believed that the period of preparation would be short, bearing in mind de Foucauld's previous studies in philosophy and theology, and he wished, as did his disciple, that the period of preparation should be passed in the monastery of Notre Dame des Neiges, where he had begun his religious life. As there was no hurry, Abbé Huvelin intended to take, at the proper time, whatever steps might be necessary to arrange the matter with the Abbot of the monastery and the Bishop of the diocese. "Enveloped," as he said of himself, "in a network of sorrows," M. Huvelin kept on writing short notes in which he expressed his views on the plans submitted to him by de Foucauld. "But the slowness of the posts, the impossibility of arriving at a complete understanding at such a distance, the instinctive longing to seize the flying skirts of Time overcame Charles de Foucauld's patience. He made up his mind, sent a line to, the Abbé Huvelin to tell him what he was about to do, and set out for France" (August, 1900).

Spiritual direction at the distance of 3,000 miles or so is a difficult matter. What was Abbé Huvelin to think of this sudden return to France? His advice had not been followed; in spite of a telegram,

“Remain at Nazareth,” Charles de Foucauld was on his way home. At first the Abbé was displeased and worried, but scarcely had this terrible penitent appeared than he, like others, submitted to the charm, acknowledged his entire good faith, and something other and greater than mere good faith—the sure and mysterious call which Charles de Foucauld had obeyed.

At first, and with only Brother Charles’s letter in his hand to announce the approaching visit, Abbé Huvelin, who was easily moved and quick to express his feelings, cried out: “The die is cast; will anything stop him?” Then came another letter dated August 16. Brother Charles had disembarked at Marseilles, and, yielding to an attraction he had long felt for St Mary Magdalen, went off to la Sainte Baume to pray at her shrine; he intended to take the first train to Paris, and in case he did not find M. Huvelin at the Rue de Laborde he would go on to Fontainebleau, where, as a matter of fact, the Abbé happened to be staying, ill as usual, and suffering agonies from gout. M. Huvelin made up his mind to return to Paris, where he welcomed his beloved hermit, who was dressed amazingly, and looked utterly worn out—at least he should have done so; the Abbé scolded him a little and then listened to what he had to say. At this meeting, after so many years, there was much to be said. A whole day was not enough to say all, to give explanations, to show the connecting links between all that had occurred. After his penitent had gone Abbé Huvelin wrote: “He dined, slept, and breakfasted here, and then set out for Notre Dame des Neiges, and Rome.... He is a most holy soul. He wishes to be a priest, and I told him what to do. He had a little, a very little, money; I gave him a little more. He knew quite well what were my ideas; I had sent him a telegram, but there was something more powerful urging him, and there is nothing for me to do but wonder at and love him.”

He arrived at Rome in September, 1900, and in a letter to a friend says:

“There is no longer any question, as I think I wrote you, of my living on the Mount of Beatitudes; in accordance with the advice of the Abbé, as soon as I am ordained I shall go back to Nazareth and

live, as a priest, in solitude.”

After a few weeks in Rome he set out for La Trappe to begin his preparation for the priesthood, but before doing so he wrote to M. Huvelin for permission to pay a visit, on his way to the monastery, to his sister, whom he had not seen for ten years. The permission came, and he spent some days with his relations in Burgundy, taking up his residence at La Trappe on September 29, 1900.

It was here that the first ideas came to him of devoting the remainder of his life to spreading the faith in the Moslem world. In the following year he was ordained at Viviers on June 9 by Monsignor Montety, and said his first Mass on the next day at Notre Dame des Neiges. In order to take up his residence in Morocco as a hermit-priest it was necessary to obtain permission from both the military and ecclesiastical authorities. Abbé Huvelin set about obtaining the latter. He first applied to Monsignor Bazin, but, on discovering that the superior of the White Fathers in Northern Africa was the competent authority, he also wrote to Monsignor Livinhac.

“Martigny-les-Bains,
“*August* 25, 1901.

“My Lord,

“Viscount Charles de Foucauld has asked me to let him have a line of introduction to your Lordship; he was formerly a Lieutenant in the army in Africa, then an intrepid and skilful explorer, and after that a novice with the Trappist Fathers at Akbés in Syria; he then devoted himself to the service of the Poor Clares at Nazareth, and at length returned to the Trappists at Notre Dame des Neiges, where he was ordained priest.

“When you meet him you will see that these lines of introduction are unnecessary; he is his own best recommendation.

“You will observe in him heroic devotion, endurance without limits, a vocation for work among the Moslems, a zeal at once humble and patient, and in his zeal and enthusiasm a spirit of obedience; he has, moreover, a spirit of penance that is without a

shadow of severity or censoriousness towards others.

“I have been his spiritual director for the last fifteen years. I have kept constantly in touch with him, and have ever found him prudent in the height of his energy and enthusiasm; he knows how to wait, and when action is forbidden he takes refuge in prayer.

“I admire and love him, as do the Trappist Fathers who are writing to you on his behalf. The Reverend Father Abbot of Staoüeli had a true affection for him, and looked on him as the hope of the order even after he had left it.

“M. de Foucauld’s difficulty was about receiving Holy Orders. In his humility he refused for a long time to receive them. He needed a strong light to recognise that this was the right road for an apostolate of which prayer was to be the support.

“I am sending you a simple portrait of him; it is lifelike, but without a trace of flattery. I am not known to your Lordship, but I trust you may find the semblance of truth in what I say, and that you will see in the priest who presents himself to you a help and a blessing for the African Missions.

“Be pleased, etc....

“ABBÉ HUVELIN,
“*Honorary Canon of Paris, etc.*”

In de Foucauld’s own letter to the Bishop he asked for permission to establish a small public oratory in the Sahara in the neighbourhood of one of the French outposts, to accept any priest or layman who might offer to join him, and to do all this at his own expense. His idea was to supply spiritual help to soldiers who had little opportunity of seeing a priest, and, above all, to evangelise the infidels.

Abbé Huvelin wrote as follows to Monsignor Livinhac:

“*Sunday, September 1, 1901.*

“My Lord,

“Just a week ago I wrote to Monsignor Bazin, of the White Fathers, all that you would wish to know from me concerning M. de Foucauld, who asked me to write to Mgr. Bazin. I have nothing to tell your Lordship about him save what is good in every respect: great enthusiasm and wisdom, much zeal and obedience, love for a hard life with a minimum of comfort, and a love for spiritual direction. In his case the love of mortification is a need springing from his love of God.

“His vocation has always been for the Moslem world. His residence in Algeria, his travels in the interior of Morocco, the years he spent in Palestine have prepared and hardened him for this mission. I have seen this vocation grow. I have observed how it has taught him wisdom, how it has made him more humble, simple, and obedient. When I told him to put aside his idea as chimerical he did so, but it came back stronger and more imperious. In my soul and conscience I believe it to be from God. You will find in him a love of silence, and of action in retirement.... The difficulty he experienced at La Trappe rose from his unwillingness to receive Holy Orders. He did not dare to do so!

“Your Lordship will find nothing odd, nothing unusual about M. de Foucauld, but just an irresistible force that urges him on, and a *powerful instrument for a difficult task*.

“All the objections that may occur to you, how many times have they not occurred to me! I have surrendered only to the lesson of experience and after prolonged trials.

“Fortitude, a desire to go to all lengths in love and self-oblation, to face all their consequences; no discouragement, never; a slight touch of harshness formerly, but how it has softened!

“Let him go to you and see him! I regret I destroyed the splendid letter in which he so humbly asked me to give some information about himself. I send you this in all sincerity, as a supplement to what I wrote to Mgr. Bazin eight days ago. Let him come to you at his own risk and peril, set him to work, and form your own

judgement!

“Be assured, my Lord, of my respect, my profound and religious devotion to your person, and pray give me your blessing.

“I cannot express how touched and penetrated I have been by your letter in which I have discerned the spirit of God, a spirit that will quickly recognise him who leads my beloved child.

“ABBÉ HUVELIN.”

Before the end of the month Father de Foucauld had arrived in Africa, and on October 28, 1901, he reached Beni-Abbes in the south of the province of Oran, where he was some three hundred miles distant from the nearest priest. He bought a small property, built himself a little oratory, and was completely happy. In the past he had gone through great interior trials and much darkness of spirit, which he had surmounted by “entire obedience, even in the smallest details, to the Abbé; I clung to him as a child does to its mother’s skirts. Now,” he writes, “I am in utter peace.” The penitential life he led was so severe that M. Huvelin was constrained to write a warning to him to be moderate.

“My dear friend, my dear child,” he wrote, “bear with yourself, be humble, be patient with yourself; do not be so anxious about doing without sleep as doing without worry and that restless search for the best that torments you.

“Keep yourself in peace so as to receive God’s graces, and if you have, and preserve a hatred of self, let it be a hatred as calm as deep waters ... keep a hold on yourself; do not bring yourself too low; eat a little; take enough sleep in order to be able to work.”

In a letter to Father Guerin on February 27, 1903, Father de Foucauld wrote: “As to what you say in your letter about fasting, I will be as moderate as I can; I will eat enough and drink milk; moreover, in accordance with M. Huvelin’s order, I have been taking care of myself for several months past; I make use of milk extract, and eat when I feel hungry.”

After some time at Beni-Abbes he conceived the idea of penetrating still further into the interior with the object of evangelising the Tuaregs, a Berber race, who were reported to be more intelligent and less fanatical than the Arabs.

In his diary he notes: "I have written to Mgr. Guerin on June 29 to ask his permission — until he is able to send some priests there — to settle amongst the Tuaregs, and as far as possible in the heart of the country; I shall pray there, study the language, translate the holy Gospel, and get in touch with the Tuaregs." On July 13 he notes: "I received a letter from M. Huvelin authorising me to go."

Towards the end of the year he went on retreat, and wrote to his director at Paris: "The three chief points during the year 1903 for which I have to ask forgiveness from Jesus are: Gluttony, want of charity towards my neighbour, and lukewarmness towards God." Now he never ate save when he was hungry, he prayed day and night, and he never repulsed anyone who sought him. But the perfect are in need of humility for their advancement. He was still uncertain as to whether it was his duty to remain at his post in Beni-Abbes or penetrate further south, and as usual he consulted M. Huvelin.

"I am most uncertain about the journey I have been planning towards the south, to the oases of Touat and Tidikelt, which are absolutely without a priest, where our soldiers never get Mass, and where the Musulmans never see a minister of Jesus Christ ... you may remember that, as I was authorised by yourself, Mgr. Guerin, and the military authorities, I was about to set out when I was summoned to Taghit to look after the wounded.... Now that order has been restored, do you think I should carry out my plan? This is a big note of interrogation as far as I am concerned. I already know that Mgr. Guerin leaves me at perfect liberty, and hence I am asking your advice.

"If Mgr. Guerin could and would send a priest there, I should certainly not go; my clear duty is to remain on at Beni-Abbes. But I think he does not wish to send, I even think he cannot send a priest.

"Under the circumstances, should I not go and establish a foot—

ing, if I may say so, in the extreme south, where I can go for two or three months every year, making use of the journey to administer, or at least to offer, the sacraments to the garrisons, and to let the Musulmans see the Cross and the Sacred Heart whilst saying a few words to them about our holy religion?...

“Just at present there is nothing easier, as I have been asked to go, and they are expecting me. I have an excessive natural repugnance to it. I shudder—I am ashamed—at the thought of leaving Beni-Abbes, and the peace I feel at the altar steps, in order to set out again on my travels, for, just now, I have an excessive horror of them. If I did not believe, with all my strength, that words like *easy*, *difficult*, *joy*, and *sacrifice* should be eliminated from the dictionary, I should say that I am rather sad at going away, even for a while, from Beni-Abbes.

“I see quite clearly the inconveniences of it: leaving the tabernacle empty at Beni-Abbes, getting far away from here to a place where there may be fighting (not that that is very likely), the spiritual dissipation of such a journey, which is not good for the soul; do I not glorify God better by adoring him in solitude?

“In spite of the opposition of nature and reason, I feel myself more and more interiorly urged to undertake the journey.

“There is a convoy setting out for the south on January 10. I beg you to send me a line on the subject. I will obey you. If I do not hear from you before January 10 I shall probably go.”

He set out on January 10, 1904, and spent the whole year visiting the scattered French outposts and entering into friendly relations with the desert tribes. He did not get back to Beni-Abbes until January 24, 1905, and, three months afterwards, was invited by his friend, General Laperinne, to spend the summer months visiting the tribes in the south. He was very ill at ease about setting off again, and wrote to consult Abbé Huvelin, pointing out that a strong motive for accepting the invitation lay in the hope that he might get someone to aid him in making the work permanent, but that, at the same time, these long expeditions were very trying. Abbé Huvelin

consulted Mgr. Guerin, who was just then in France, and they telegraphed to him: "We think you should accept the invitation."

Accordingly he set out for the Sahara, and reached the Hoggar country towards July. He established himself at Tamanrasset, a village of about twenty families, situated on a plateau about 5,000 feet above sea-level. He there set up an oratory and celebrated the first Mass in Hoggar on September 7, 1905. His idea was to spend half his time at Beni-Abbes and the other half amongst the Tuareg tribes. When he had settled down he began to lead his usual life of prayer and good works; he also set about translating selections from the sacred Scripture into the Tuareg tongue. The next few years were spent alternately at Beni-Abbes and Tamanrasset. Towards the end of 1908 his sister, Madame de Blic, succeeded in getting him to consent to pay a visit to France. He wrote to her on an old envelope, "because," as he said, "the nearest stationer is over six hundred miles away; if you wish me to come home make your request to God and the Abbé Huvelin, who interprets the divine will for me." M. Huvelin replied: "I heartily wish you to make this little trip to France to see your relations.... I see no objections to it—with or without a Tuareg."

He landed at Marseilles on February 17, 1909, and spent three weeks visiting his relatives and friends, including, of course, the Abbé Huvelin, whom he was to lose in the following year. In a letter to Father Voillard he says: "I ask a prayer for my director, M. Huvelin; he has been my spiritual father for the past twenty-five years; nothing can express all he has been to me, and all that I owe him. The news I have been getting of his health is distressing. I am afraid of hearing by every post that he has finished his time of exile." Two months later M. Huvelin was dead, and "he whom the Abbé had led back to God, shed tears, and then raised his eyes to heaven and found there a joy that does not change." To one of the White Fathers who had written a letter of sympathy on his loss, he replied: "Yes, Jesus suffices; where he is, nothing is wanting. However dear they may be in whom a reflection of him shines, yet it is he who remains All. He is All in time and eternity."

Before M. Huvelin died he had sent 200 francs to Father Charles

SOME SPIRITUAL GUIDES OF THE 17TH CENTURY

to help him build another little mountain chapel at Asekrem, about 9,000 feet above sea-level, and he also provided an altar for the chapel. It was a fitting end to a friendship that had lasted for a quarter of a century.

Six years later, on Friday, December 1, 1916, in the midst of the Great War, Charles de Foucauld was killed at Tamanrasset by a wandering group of tribesmen. The motives of the murder were, in all probability, mixed: greed, fear, and a hatred of the Christian faith.

Last autumn His Holiness Pope Pius XI ordered the institution of a preliminary enquiry into the life of Charles de Foucauld as the first step towards his beatification, and Père Joyeux, of the White Fathers, was entrusted with the duty of carrying out a task that may end in the addition of another saint to our altars. Should this be God's will, who can doubt but that his chief human instrument in providing us with a further example of Christian heroism was the Abbé Huvelin?

I wish in conclusion to express my thanks to the Very Reverend Thomas O'Donnell, C.M., President, All Hallows College, Dublin, for advice and valuable suggestions, and to Mr. Algar Thorold for entrusting me with the Memorandum drawn up by Baron von Hügel on Littré's last days. I have also to thank Dr. Edmund Gardner, the literary executor of Baron von Hügel, and to his publishers Messrs J. M. Dent and Son, London, and Messrs. T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh, for permission to make use of Baron von Hügel's published works, as also to Messrs Burns Oates and Washbourne for allowing me to adapt and make my own version of *Charles de Foucauld*, of which they publish a translation.

JOSEPH LEONARD.

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MIDDLESEX.

Feast of St Vincent de Paul.

July 19, 1927.

PREFACE

The following pages have been put together for a few of those who listened to, and were the friends of, the Abbé Huvelin; they are not intended for the general public.

They are taken from the lessons in Church history which he gave on Sunday mornings in the crypt of the Church of St Augustine. As they were addressed exclusively to quite young persons, they were bound to be very elementary; in fact, they are a sort of an extended course of catechism in the shape of history.

However, as the crypt was soon invaded by a large congregation of persons of every age, as well as by ladies, the character of the course had to be modified by their presence. The Abbé Huvelin did not cease to protest against this invasion, and always addressed himself to his "dear young friends" endeavouring to preserve the tone of an intimate and friendly conversation with them. Moreover, on account of the super-abundant pressure of his priestly duties, he had scarcely any time for preparation, and it was only his marvellous memory, resting on the foundation of studies made in other days, that enabled him to bring to life so many different characters and periods. He paid no attention whatever to form. He remarked one day: "There will be no writings left after me; I try to write only on souls."

He expressed the same idea when he resumed his talks in the month of November, 1879:

"I shall make no preliminary address; that would be like putting up a portico in front of a hovel. People ask me: 'When are you beginning your *conferences*?' I do *not* give conferences. I lay that down as a first principle. I give a little course for young persons from sixteen to eighteen years of age, and I give it for them, and only for them. There is no pretence of these addresses being anything but

catechism lessons: the recalling to mind, in connection with historical events, of lessons that have already been given, and are quickly forgotten. History sets forth doctrine from an interesting side. I even think that, at the present day, dogmas might be presented from the historical side, and that this is the best method of holding the attention. Research, erudition, must not be expected here — no, certainly not, not the least bit in the world. I do my best to keep in touch with modern works on the chief questions under consideration. I do not know whether I have been successful; I have not got much spare time, and, besides, I have not enough intelligence. Furthermore, you must not look for form here. That is impossible. Ideas sometimes come in a rush, the neck of the bottle is too narrow to let them through, and then the style is very defective.... So, take them as you find them. I will bring the best possible good-will to my work and, above all, I will strive to help souls. I do not conceal that fact from myself; I want to get at souls through the intellect, to get at what moves the will; by means of the doctrines I wish to provide new motives for belief, to give an impulse to action, self-sacrifice, and the great affair of one's own salvation: the union of the soul with the Lord. That is my sole affair; nothing else counts with me: to unite the soul with our Lord who wishes to live in it; and hence to give our minds, hearts, and actions to God."

That is the lesson which the Abbé Huvelin wished to teach his young hearers in these familiar and spontaneous talks. Just as it occurred to him, he gave them an original idea, a reminiscence from the classics, a personal recollection; he showed a little of his own soul that he might secure a hold over the souls of others. Only if they are thus understood will any unity be found in them. Many a phrase was finished by a look, a gesture; hence there has been some hesitation about printing these pages which have no pretensions to be literary. Several friends have begged for them. As they read the shorthand reports they saw the mobile, living countenance of him whom they had loved rise before their eyes. They found a charm in his long digressions, and even in the spontaneity of his words, though at times they might be inaccurate. Their memories will

supply all that is wanting.

In 1875 the Abbé Huvelin began his course with St Gregory the Great, and continued his studies in ecclesiastical history down to the end of the seventeenth century. In 1880 he went back to the early days of the Church; then, in 1884, he put history aside and gave a course of lessons on Christian morals. Two years later illness put an end to his addresses.

Almost all were taken down in shorthand. Portions of M. Huvelin's own notes are in existence as well as very copious notes taken down by many of his hearers; these have helped to fill up gaps in the shorthand report. Nevertheless, as the text was never revised by the author, if any inaccuracy be detected it should not be imputed to him.

The following lessons were given in the year 1878-79. They have been chosen in preference to some of the others because, though it never occurred to himself, M. Huvelin has often painted his own portrait when speaking of his saints, those *"living images painted by Christ himself for his Church that he might recall some of his own features to her mind and console her in her widowhood."*

Note. — The writer of the preface added some notes to the text of Abbé Huvelin's addresses. They have been translated, and are marked with the letter R. A young relative who was so kind as to read this translation in manuscript pointed out that the same amount of information regarding illustrious French men and women of the seventeenth century could scarcely be expected from young persons, such as the Abbé had in mind, on this side of the Channel, and suggested the addition of some further notes. An attempt has been made to carry out this suggestion.

A few minor inaccuracies, such as the writer of the preface anticipated, have also been corrected in the notes.

There is one point of much greater importance which deserves to be mentioned. In the course of the address on M. Olier and the

seminaries, it is stated that the French Oratory abandoned the work of the seminaries and fell into Jansenism. A recent work, *L'Oratoire de France*¹ shows the important part taken by the Oratory in the organisation of the seminaries, and further that though there were individual Oratorians who became Jansenists, it is untrue to state that the greater number of the Fathers, and above all the Superiors of the Oratory, were imbued with Jansenism. Abbé Huvelin would no doubt have been delighted to avail himself of this work, as also of the collected editions of St Vincent's works in fourteen volumes recently edited and published by Fr. Coste, C.M.,² which enable the reader to form a fuller and better estimate of the saint's mind and spirit. The proclamation of St Francis de Sales as a doctor of the Church by Pius IX in 1880, and the recent encyclical of Pius XI,³ in which attention is called to the abiding value of St Francis's teaching on the spiritual life, serve to emphasise Abbé Huvelin's lessons on this subject.

J. L.

¹ *L'Oratoire de France*, by M. Leherpeur. (Paris, Edition Spes, Rue Soufflot, 1926.)

² *St Vincent de Paul . Correspondance, Entretiens, Documents*, by P. Coste, C.M. (Paris, Gabalda, 90 Rue Bonaparte 1920–1925.)

³ *Rerum Omnium*, January 16, 1923.

SOME SPIRITUAL GUIDES OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

ST FRANCIS DE SALES (1567–1622)¹

I SHOULD like to talk to you today about St Francis de Sales. It will be rather difficult to do so in one lecture; there is nothing so difficult as being brief. I should like to speak to you about this lovable saint, who came to shed a smile of heavenly sunshine on everything.

He was like a ray of sunlight softly falling on this city of Paris, then the home of works of charity; on this land of France which is now lagging behind somewhat, but which in those days played so great a part in the history of the Church by her great men and magnificent enterprises.

St Francis de Sales was in Paris in 1601. He returned there in 1602. He lodged in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, but was not to be found there except at night, when he was at work on documents dealing with a petition entrusted to him by the Duke of Savoy. An effort was being made to induce Henry IV to re-establish Catholic parishes in the Province of Gex, which had been recently ceded to France, but was still subject to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Geneva. Statesmen, with the very best of intentions, men like the King's Ministers, were raising difficulties, and he was forced to remain longer in Paris than he would have wished. When people got this charming saint amongst them, they were unwilling to let him go, and Paris was quite pleased at having him on a rather long visit.

He might often be seen in the Rue des Juifs, in the Marais quarter, and at Madame Acarie's,² whose home was a centre of piety and

¹. December 15, 1878.

². Barbara Avrillot, born in Paris on February 1, 1566. She was the daughter of Nicholas, Chancellor to the Queen of Navarre, and Mary Luillier. She married

good works. She wished to reveal all the secrets of her heart to him, and he brought her his own special characteristic and attractive gift: Peace. There is nothing so attractive as the peace that comes from God. Many a soul is more or less troubled and instinctively seeks for someone to calm it; it feels as if it were on shifting sand, and is on the look-out for a rock. Such persons found a rock in St Francis de Sales. Madame Acarie made him her spiritual guide. He heard her confessions, and pointed out to her that she was accusing herself of matters that were not even venial sins, but simple weaknesses. He told her not to confuse imperfection, the characteristic stamp of weakness imprinted on every human action, with venial sin, which implies a deliberate intention of offending God. This very first point shows us at once what manner of saint and spiritual guide he was.

His relations with Madame Acarie's daughters also revealed it. There was one of them who was a general favourite;¹ she was looked on as a budding Carmelite. She was austere and a little bit inclined to avoid company. Now, every character cannot be moulded in the same way, and if a mother only loved her daughter because the girl showed a disposition for piety and a life of solitude, it would be just trying to force God to do something he does not wish to do. There was another sister, a charming young girl, just growing up. She had no taste for solitude, and was by no means equipped for a life of recollection, and so she was not thought of as highly as her other sisters. Such preferences are extremely trying to a child, and may warp very fine characters (it did not happen in her case). We see how St Francis de Sales helped her, and supported all her legitimate aspirations. That was his character. There was something gracious

Pierre Acarie on August 24, 1582 and had six children by him. Her great glory lay in the fact that she was mainly instrumental, together with her cousin Cardinal de Bérulle, in introducing the Carmelites into France (1602). On the death of her husband in 1613 she joined the order as a lay sister. Two of her daughters were already Carmelite nuns. She died at Pontoise in 1618. At the instance of Louis XVI, the Princess Louise of France, and the French Church she was beatified in 1791.

¹. Marguerite, later Mother Marguerite of the Blessed Sacrament. She was at this period thirteen years old (R.). Her reputation for sanctity as a Carmelite nun exceeded even that of her mother.

and winning about him; whatever could be turned to the service of God he let bud and blossom, just pruning, directing, and correcting whenever there was any necessity of doing so.

He had plenty of visitors. At thirty-five years of age he had already a reputation for sanctity, and so, from all quarters, people came to visit him. Children were brought to see him; he was fond of them. "Suffer little children to come unto me"; "Let my little family come to me," was a saying of St Francis de Sales. Michelet sneered at the phrase "my little family," because he looked on it as a trick or dodge for getting a hold on people. But this was not the case at all. It was just the spontaneous expression of his heart. Many seventeenth-century men, such as M. Olier, gloried in having been blessed by him. How he scattered kind words! What an impression he made! He was a sower. He sowed good seed in a thousand different ways. His words were seeds that God brought to life in men's hearts: at one time just a word that was never forgotten; at another, a piece of advice that marked the starting-point for a more Christian life. He used to preach a good deal because he did not know how to refuse anything; he made no attempt to preach before fashionable congregations, such as the Court, where, indeed, he was presented by the Duchess of Mercœur. No; he used to preach in the smallest chapel; if there were only two or three persons present, he was enchanted at being able to do some little good. He was like the vase, spoken of by St Irenæus, that was always full, always sweet-smelling, communicating its perfume to the water poured out from it: *Juvenescens et juvenescere faciens* {'Renewing its youth, and making youthful'; *Adv. hæc.* 3.38.1}. In the heart of St Francis de Sales the living water of charity was being ever renewed; it was ever pure, ever purifying, and was being constantly poured forth from his heart.

CONVERSIONS.

He spoke with ease and fluency on religious topics, and Protestants were converted without his making use of a controversial word. People were surprised at that. Why? There is really no need for astonishment. St Francis de Sales touched people's hearts; he may

not, perhaps, have convinced their intellects, but he had planted in their hearts a wish to believe and love; people were grateful to a preacher for the kind feelings they inwardly experienced on hearing him speak. When a man wishes something to be true, he is very near finding it true. And that is the whole secret of St Francis de Sales. Bossuet, who interprets him remarkably well, says: "Heretics must be won by a display of charity rather than by wrangling with them; the zeal of a disputant may possibly spring from his desire for victory. A man may feel bitterly towards you when you attack his ideas, but he will always be grateful to those who are anxious for his welfare. He is on his guard against being regarded as the spoils of victory, but he will never be annoyed at being loved."

That is really a charming remark and quite true. St Francis de Sales was not looking for victory; he wanted to win souls for God. He was ambitious, as Henry IV was; provided he won, he did not bother about the triumphal procession. Bossuet also says that his preaching and direction were very much on a par; he did not address an audience, but spoke to a group of souls, each of whom recognised itself in what was said, because he spoke on matters of which each had had experience. He introduced good by every door. Bossuet also says: "Whoever wishes to win a heart must select the most favourable approach. Do not attack the strong position where presumption has entrenched itself. Advance by the easiest road, and try to win the mind that shuns you by way of the heart that is ready to welcome you." That was the whole tactic of St Francis de Sales' method of direction. Michelet¹ noted this winning method of proceeding—which was quite natural to St Francis—this anxiety to take people on their soft side, and he called it mere clever policy. Not at all. It was policy in the grand manner, the policy of love; a soul that loves will, ultimately, be more or less loved. An enemy may repulse it, but disinterested affection will always gain something. There is not a scrap

¹ Jules Michelet (1798–1874), the celebrated French historian, published courses of lectures, which he had delivered, in the form of books under the titles of *Le Prêtre*, *La Femme et la Famille*, and *Le Peuple*, in which his extreme anti-sacerdotal views were violently expressed.

of vulgar policy about it.

St Francis de Sales was perhaps rather skilful; he had a very subtle mind. If you pick up his books you will find in them a minute study of the passions, more minute even than Montaigne's,¹ closer, more penetrating — a study that is not a mere exposition, but an attempt to get down to the roots. From this point of view it would be interesting to compare a few chapters from the *Essays* with some from *An Introduction to a Devout Life*. Such subtlety is the result of the knowledge of souls acquired by a priest who guides them; the result of a profound clear-sightedness that springs from the priest's affection for those whom he is anxious to save. There is nothing so piercing as affection. Love, and you will know. Love, and by dint of loving you will find out. But in order to do so the intellect must be brought into play, the mind must be sharpened by charity; but St Francis had not the rather contemptible cleverness attributed to him.

HIS WINNING GRACIOUSNESS.

Such was the impression he made on Paris. He attracted attention on all sides. If he had chosen a motto it might well have been: *Beati mites quia possidebunt terram* {‘Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth’, Matt 5:5}. Blessed are the meek, but not the meekness that flows from want of strength. There is no type of person so annoying as that on whom no impression can be made; one finds oneself face to face, not with a real human being but with a sort of anvil, prepared to suffer everything, or at the worst to utter a groan. We prefer to deal with anything rather than a stuffed pillow that always yields to pressure. We feel about St Francis de Sales that his meekness was a victory won over a naturally hasty and impetuous temperament; he was easily moved in that part of the soul the schoolmen call the *pars concupiscibilis* {concupiscent part}. His feelings were easily aroused and brought into action (it is a necessary condition for doing any good whatsoever), and, at the

¹. Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592). The *Essays* were first published in two books in 1580. A third book was added to the new edition that appeared in 1588.

same time, we feel that beneath the stormy sea of his heart there lay a profound calm. It was meekness triumphant; and so when St Francis de Sales appeared, people thought of our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem: "Behold your King coming to you in all meekness"; they thought of the garments strewn by the wayside, of the palm branches gathered to do him honour. It was the triumphant meekness of Christ reflected in St Francis de Sales. A saint is a public benefactor; everyone feels that a saint has a corner in his heart for himself. On the day a saint is born, God, in his loving-kindness, sees an infinite multitude of souls whom he desires to save, whom he desires to benefit. God's mercy is creative, and St Francis de Sales springs from a divine smile. He was a smile himself, a living image of the goodness of God. Everybody had a place in his heart; he loved all for Christ's sake, and loved Christ above all.

According to Montaigne's philosophy, the "honest"¹ man should be kind and ever ready to help his fellow-men; he should not be troublesome or complaining; he should be polite, and know how to put himself out for the sake of others. According to Pascal, politeness may be summed up as "Put yourself to some trouble." It is perfectly clear that such a code is entirely concerned with man in relation to his fellow-man. How far loftier and more beautiful is the saint's ideal! How far surpassing the ideal drawn by Charron² or

¹. The sense in which the *honnête homme* was used in seventeenth-century France was that of a man endowed with all the qualities that go to make him an agreeable member of society. Perhaps the ideal is best expressed in Newman's words: "All that goes to constitute a gentleman—the carriage, gait, address, gestures, voice; the ease, the self-possession, the courtesy, the power of conversing, the success in not offending; the lofty principle, the delicacy of thought, the happiness of expression, the taste and propriety, the generosity and forbearance, the candour and consideration, the openness of hand—these qualities, some of them come by nature, some of them may be found in any rank, some of them are a direct precept of Christianity; but the full assemblage of them, bound up in the unity of an individual character, do we expect them to be learned from books? Are they not necessarily acquired, where they are to be found, in high society?" (*University Sketches*, p. 10, by John Henry Cardinal Newman, Walter Scott Publishing Company.)

². Pierre Charron (1541-1603), born in Paris, became a priest and a Canon. He

Montaigne of the man with whom one can get on easily! To what a height are good manners raised by charity, which perfects the finest shades of feeling! No longer have we the rather bleak order, "Put yourself to some trouble for the sake of others," but "Give yourself, scatter, scatter with a free hand the gifts our Lord Jesus Christ has given you, and show gratitude to him who has laden you with such magnificent favours." There is not a scrap of similarity between the smile of St Francis de Sales and that of Montaigne's "honest" man. What a depressing individual is the "honest" man! A person who is always smiling is a trifler, flat, and commonplace to the point of irritation. There was nothing commonplace about St Francis de Sales' smile; it was bestowed on all, but each individual felt that it came from the heart; a saint's happiness is a public benefit to be shared in by all. Such kindness has an immense power for good on souls. As a rule, our minds are sad; and if they can be made glad, not, indeed, as they may be, by a sudden lightning-flash of feeling, but graciously and in a way by which the soul is made more at ease and happier, it is just like rolling away a stone, for three-quarters of our unhappiness springs, says St Francis de Sales, "from vapours of the mind and the imagination."

We have the feeling that the sadness of a saint is something he has taken on his own shoulders from the common burden of all. Sadness in a man who has undertaken to give himself to others is a form of egoism, a personal self-centredness; to be happy for the sake of others when there is good reason to be sad on one's own account is a form of devotion and charity. The attractive quality in St Francis de Sales is his gaiety and kindness, which are the outpourings of a heart whose sole preoccupation is to give.

Combined with this quality—and a further source of attraction—is the unique character of his gift. Men realised that he possessed no quality in such exclusive fashion as not, at the same time, to possess

met Montaigne in 1592 and was greatly influenced by him. He published in 1601 a volume on moral philosophy called *De la Sagesse*; the work is cynical in tone, and is marked by complete intellectual scepticism. It was strongly attacked, on its appearance, by the Jesuit Father Garrasse. Charron never left the Church.

its opposite; they saw that his gentleness was based on strength. Worldly people looked on him as a man who made religion cheap, who could attract certain types of character, who weakened the strictness of the old penitential discipline. Worldly people are very much inclined to judge in that way; they are ready to blame people who show that a Christian life may be led in any circumstances; according to them, for religion to be true, it should be impossible ... they have their own reasons for thinking so.

HIS METHOD OF DIRECTION: FIDELITY AND PATIENCE WITH SELF.

Mère Angélique¹ did not look on St Francis de Sales in that light. And yet she was a very determined character, with very decided views, a woman who wanted all or nothing, ever pushing forward, the very antithesis of those exquisitely balanced souls who possess opposite qualities that are “reciprocal and complementary,” as Pascal says. Mère Angélique wrote: “I have had experience of the holy Bishop of Geneva’s direction. I have never found, as I have been informed, that it was easy.” Now Mother Angélique was a very strong personality; she would have liked to advance, as if shot from a spring, by leaps and bounds — as Bossuet said of the Prince de Condé — with her soul in her hands, ready to be hurled onwards. She was a type of soul that does not know how to travel through the

¹ Mère Angélique, Jacqueline Marie Angélique Arnauld (1591–1661), was the third child of A. Arnauld and sister of “the great” Arnauld, the chief upholder of Jansenism after the death of the Abbé Saint-Cyran. She entered the Benedictine convent of St Antoine, Paris, at the age of eight. She was transferred to Maubuisson in 1600, appointed coadjutrix of the Abbey of Port Royal aux Champs, a relaxed convent of Cistercian nuns, in 1602. On her conversion to a devout life in 1608 she carried out the reform of the convent, as also those of the Abbey of Maubuisson. She transferred the nuns from Port Royal aux Champs to a new convent in the Faubourg Saint Jacques, which was also called Port Royal. During this period she was under the spiritual guidance of St Francis de Sales. The happiest period in the life of Port Royal was from 1620 to 1630. The influence of Saint-Cyran began to make itself increasingly felt from 1633 until his death in 1641. Her subsequent history is identified with the Jansenist movement until her death in 1661.

desert of life, especially through that desert which is called the spiritual life. St Francis de Sales made her slow down; his style of direction was towards moderation. He was devoted to “little by little,” which is by no means lax devotion. St Paul says that the direction of souls *agricultura est*, {is farming} and a farmer must be patient; he does not expect to see what he has sown today spring up tomorrow. Now St Francis de Sales was just like that. He was patient, and he was a patient guide of souls, and Mother Angélique thoroughly approved of his direction; she felt that he was firm, there was something vigorous about him, and even the Jansenists did not venture to criticise him on that score.

As for worldly folk, who understand nothing — absolutely nothing — of divine things, they, of course, point to St Francis de Sales as a type of easy piety. He gave permission to his lady penitents to go to balls. But going to balls or theatres every night is not *ipso facto* being devout according to St Francis de Sales; he never gave the slightest encouragement to anyone to let the little stream of the living water of devotion get lost in the flood of a worldly life. The saint who loved God above all only desired that everything should be done for the love of God.

Society was scandalised at his beatification in 1661, and at his canonisation in 1665. Society said that he was the model of a perfect courtier, that he was easy-going, and that he cheated at cards — of course, for the sake of the poor. That is what the second Princess Palatine said. She was a really horrid woman. (It was said that she was an “honest” woman. God preserve us from women as “honest” and as gossipy as she was.)

They went on to say that he lowered the standard of holiness; he went to heaven in a coach-and-four. “Let us go to heaven,” said Bussy-Rabutin,¹ “along the pleasant road marked out for us by my

¹ Roger de Rabutin, Comte de Bussy (1618-1693), author of the celebrated *Mémoires*, published after his death, was related to St Francis de Sales through one of the saint’s brothers having married a daughter of Jane Frances Fremiot (St Chantal), wife of De Rabutin, Baron de Chantal.

good cousin, Francis de Sales.” Now we must see what exactly is this pleasant road. People made a portrait of St Francis de Sales for themselves as a “decent fellow” — the most horrible quality that could be attributed to a priest with a mission to speak in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. St Francis de Sales was no worldling ready to cheapen things. He put a little honey on the edge of the cup; if you like, he put just a little too much. I used to know souls who had no sympathy with him, weather-beaten souls in whose lives there had been many failings, and they used to say: “I don’t at all care for your pointing out to me the graciousness of St Francis de Sales, or your speaking to me in his style. Just show me the Cross itself, and I will never say ‘That is enough,’ not to speak of saying, ‘It is too much.’ What I want to feel is its bitterness, because I have had too much experience of deceitful pleasures; I want to make expiation.” There are souls who speak like that.... Very well, just walk in under the triumphal arch wreathed with garlands, and you will soon find a hard and narrow road, not a bit of the broad highway about it, a stony path leading heavenwards. St Francis de Sales is most exacting. He promised a great deal on behalf of our Lord, who promised himself, but he also demands a great deal. He has no desire to hurl souls headlong into holy living, but, following the dispositions he notes in them (and he was a past-master in clear-sightedness), at the hour when God calls, because he has given them some special favour, then does St Francis de Sales grow exacting. He was a severe director.

He was not a director with a special vocabulary, a jargon of his own. “Devotion and geometry,” as La Bruyère¹ maliciously remarked, “have a special terminology of their own.” Such phraseology was utterly unknown to the Apostles. St Francis de Sales was not a “verbal nonentity” or an “incarnate void.” By no means. He had very clear and definite ideas about spiritual direction; he demanded

¹ Jean de la Bruyère (1645-1696), essayist and moralist. He was introduced by Bossuet into the de Condé family, and acted as tutor to the son of the “great Condé.” His most remarkable work, the *Caractères*, was published in 1688.

deeds — and more deeds, action — and action yet again. There is no use in calling that “a trifle”; it sometimes means really hard work. The greatness of a sacrifice should not be measured by the deed taken in itself, but by what it costs; a very trifling affair may demand great effort.

That was St Francis de Sales’ standpoint; above all else, he was practical. Sainte-Beuve remarks: “He does not begin with anything remarkably striking, such as ecstasies, or that experimental union with God which so powerfully attracts great souls; he begins with humility and the practical virtues.” He begins where a beginning should be made, with fidelity. We have not occasions every day for practising heroic acts, but we can do small things in an heroic spirit. Meekness and humility, the foundations of the spiritual life, cannot be sufficiently insisted on, and that is the specific character of St Francis de Sales’ method of direction.

His preaching resembled his direction; he asked for positive practical deeds from his hearers. “Let us love, not in words, but in deeds.” Presumptuous folk were rather repelled by his moderate demands: “I want to do more!” “Lord, if there be need, to die with thee...” said St Peter, and we know what happened to him. St Francis de Sales took such persons down; he manifested a sort of violence against the kind of zeal that may turn to aridity tomorrow, and lead to a profound and almost incurable discouragement. And so he guided souls by the way of fidelity. This may be seen in St Jane Chantal’s *Deposition*. (She was the person who loved him best, and whom he loved most.) In this document, which is an admirable biography of him, she says: “Even in the practice of the virtues he selected those that are less striking and esteemed; he preferred humility, meekness, constant support of one’s neighbour, condescension to the wishes of others, poverty of spirit, modesty, simplicity, and other such little virtues which spring up, as he used to say, at the foot of the Cross, virtues that are not noticed, that do not excite surprise, and are not thought much of, because they make no show.”

Another great point about his direction was, *Patience with one’s own self*. To be patient with ourselves is the most difficult thing of all.

It is like the rock of Sisyphus, which was rolled up very laboriously to the top of the hill and then came down, bounding along; we have to begin again, and, at times, we would prefer to sit down below rather than roll it up again. We feel excessively tired and irritable. Such a state of mind constitutes a great danger for the soul, and it must be fought by patience with one's self.

St Francis de Sales built, as well as he could, with the material that lay to his hand. The director's art is often shown by how he deals with the remnants. Something really good may be made out of what is left over. A vase that has been broken into bits may be made into an artistic object if the pieces are put together: the current of divine grace is then passed through it, and it becomes a new vase.

Here is another mark of his direction. "Proceed simply," he says, "along the road traced out for you by our Lord; do not torment your mind. Faults should be hated, but *hated tranquilly*." That is the sort of saying Port Royal¹ could not grasp! Nicole² would never have understood such a remark! We must not act like the lion that was annoyed by the fly. We should hate our faults, not with an irritated and disturbing hatred, but with a tranquil hate. We need patience to see them and derive benefit from them; they should teach us humility. That's perfectly correct. Does that remark only concern the direction of women? Not at all.... It especially concerns men. I mention this because St Francis de Sales relates that many men would not read his *Introduction to a Devout Life* because it was written for a woman, Philothea. But Philothea simply means the soul that loves God, and men have souls just as much as women. On the other hand, his *Treatise on the Love of God* was addressed to Theotimus, and he says that he hopes women also will read it because Theotimus is the soul

^{1.} The term Port Royal is applied not merely to the nuns of either Port Royal des Champs or Port Royal in the Faubourg Saint Jacques, but to the group of persons associated with the monastery.

^{2.} Pierre Nicole (1625–1695). Joined the solitaries of Port Royal des Champs in 1649 and took a leading part in the Jansenist controversy, as well as in the controversy about Quietism in which he supported Bossuet, and the controversy about monastic studies in which he supported Mabillon.

in search of God, and women, just as much as men, desire to advance in the spiritual life. St Francis speaks to men just as much as he does to women. I would say that the *Devout Life* is even more especially intended for men. What is it that retards the conversion of most men? The experience of their own wretchedness, the pitiful depths of their souls. So they say: "How can I come to terms with that? It is impossible." And so they wait for a day that will never dawn, when all this wretchedness will be trampled on, and they can hasten on to God. But when a man is ill, does he wait until he is well before venturing to send for a doctor? You are ill now, and yet you do not dare call on your Saviour! A man will say: "Before going to Holy Communion, I must be in such a state of soul as can hardly be imagined, which I can scarcely foresee, when I shall be at perfect peace, when all will be pure and good, and my soul will shoot up, like a fountain, towards heaven." And so he does not dare; he would willingly wait till the day of his death so that he might have not to live on, after receiving Holy Communion, with the experience of a heart-rending doubt as to whether he has made a bad communion. That is a great rock in the path of conversion. Holy Communion would cure the soul were it not that false ideas about Holy Communion keep the soul back, and the day will never dawn when the soul thinks it is ready to receive it. Listen to St Francis de Sales: "Although I feel my own wretchedness, still that does not disturb me. Sometimes I am even quite pleased about it, for I recognise that I am then a really good object for the display of God's mercy." That is the charming expression of a soul preserving its serenity by reliance on God, and not on self, that knows how to make use of its own misery. Is not our wretchedness a title to divine mercy?

Such was the spirit that St Francis de Sales, who was then coadjutor to the Bishop of Geneva, brought with him to Paris in 1602. That spirit was not understood; he was criticised by some priests who wanted external as well as internal austerity. But all the same, it was the fruit of a long experience of the spiritual and priestly life. He taught what he had practised; he had gone through it all himself. Speaking of the difficulty of reconciling the demands of purity and charity, he remarked: "A layman should, before all else, put charity

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under the guardianship of purity. But a priest should protect his purity by charity, and God will never suffer it to be attacked." Every saint and spiritual director has passed through a furnace of experience which has taught him to know the trials and sorrows of others from his own.

St Francis de Sales had had early experience of all this.

HIS GROWTH: INTERIOR TRIALS.

He had come to Paris long before the year 1602. He arrived there when he was fifteen years of age. He was a student at the Jesuit College of Clermont in 1581, 1582, 1583, and 1584. He studied rhetoric and philosophy, and read a course of theology. He was a young nobleman, of gentle birth, and very touchy. When he went to college he put aside his sword, but on the slightest pretext his hand was ready to move towards it. He had a fixed idea: he wanted to be a saint! There are souls who say: "My mind is made up." They hack their way forward by dint of enormous will-power. "I will be a saint," he used to say. There was one of his companions whom he looked on as a typical saint; he used to pray with his head sunk between his shoulders, and Francis de Sales also began to sink his head between his shoulders in order to be a saint. But the idea occurred to him that this was not holiness, which was a much more difficult thing to come by; it was meekness which he made his objective, humility which he wished to attain to, simplicity which seemed very beautiful to him. He said to himself that the cross should not be like convent grills, with the spikes projecting outwards; the spikes should be turned inwards.

A gracious exterior and an austere interior were two ideas already dear to the boy and young man. You are following the growth of Francis de Sales' development.

When he was quite a lad he went through a dreadful experience. You remember Luther's trial, when brought face to face with himself, and he could see evil, and nothing but evil. St Francis de Sales had

such an experience, and that too in a very cruel form, when he was only seventeen. He felt his own weakness and unworthiness, and at once concluded that he was not in a state of grace. This thought was a terrible torment to him. I can well understand it. When a man experiences his own nothingness, his powerlessness, that he is good for nothing, he asks himself: "Is this then the state of grace? What is the state of grace at all? What is God's grace if it does not make the will stronger and more definite? I should like to be always ready to do something great. I should like to feel a sort of interior spring coming into play, and moving my heart and hand." Now St Francis de Sales felt in no wise like that, and he used to say to himself: "Am I in the state of grace?" He had no idea of the lesson God was giving him in self-knowledge. We cannot have a knowledge of God without first obtaining a knowledge of ourselves; we must see our own nothingness, and drink of the chalice of our own wretchedness. Francis used also to say to himself: "Just as you are, at this moment, if you encountered an occasion of sin, you would fall." That's wrong. I cannot represent to myself how I should act if God subjected me to a severe temptation, because, in such circumstances, he would give me strength to resist it. I should not have the strength of myself, but I should have it from his grace, did I but ask for it. Like the Israelites in the desert, I should be provided with manna, and the water of Moses, struck from the rock by the rod. Everything by grace, nothing by nature. Such was St Francis de Sales' spiritual education. His soul grew stronger, yet, at the same time, he experienced great aridity. In such a state, what formerly helped us, gives no support; everything is sombre; there is not a ray of sunshine; there is a pall of darkness over all. "Why am I like this?" he used to ask himself, "Perhaps I have unwittingly committed a mortal sin? Perhaps God expected something from me that I have not done?" This is the state of desolation so well described by St Ignatius.

This trial lasted for several weeks. It brought him to death's door; he thought he was lost, utterly separated from God. And so he learned how to sympathise with suffering souls, so that when, later on, persons confided their troubles to him, they reminded him, like an echo, of what he had suffered himself.... St Chantal, too, had to

face similar trials. She felt like those who, on hearing an invalid say, "I am sick at heart," can reply, "I, too, am sick at heart." A person could not speak of a temptation to St Chantal without her experiencing, by a sort of compassion, their distress, because she had gone through the same sort of trial herself, and there are some keen sorrows which always leave a mark. There are certain spots in the heart that cannot be touched, because the wound is only healed on the surface. St Francis de Sales had been stricken for his brethren, for the souls he was to save.

How did he escape from this trial? He was very devout to the Blessed Virgin. Opposite Clermont College,¹ in the Rue des Grés, there was a Dominican Priory, with a little church attached, the church of St Stephen des Grés. In this church there was a very ancient statue of the Blessed Virgin; it is now in the chapel of St Thomas at Villeneuve. St Francis used to go there to pray to her. He called her his "Lady" as St Ignatius used to do. One day, when he was at the end of his tether, he went to pray there, even more earnestly than usual. He asked the Blessed Virgin to preserve his purity. That is the petition of a young man who has begun to attract attention and be liked; we can never estimate the power for good that lies in untarnished purity. St Francis wished to preserve his for the sake of souls, because, if loving-kindness is to be a gift for all, it should be guarded by purity, for purity is the cover of this fountain, destined to be poured out over others, and to render the adjoining fields fertile. So the saint asked Mary to preserve him on all occasions, and, above all, to protect him from himself; he asked that his trial might cease. At the cloister screen he remembered the prayer² that had been popularised and spread broadcast by the poor priest Claude Bernard. He repeated it, and the trial ended. Humility was the gate by which he escaped. Luther, too, made his escape, but by another door — pride and rebellion, with something of the fallen angel about him, a sort of grandeur in revolt and despair. St Francis came forth from his trial

¹. Now the Lycée Louis-le-Grand (R.).

². The *Memorare* (R.).

with another ray of glory, better fitted to console others. And in this way his spiritual education went on in Paris from 1578 to 1582.

INTRODUCTION TO A DEVOUT LIFE.

Six years after the visit of 1602 his beautiful work *An Introduction to a Devout Life* appeared. It was written at the request of Henry IV. What an acute man was Henry! He thoroughly understood St Francis de Sales. He had heard him preach at Fontainebleau and greatly admired the sermon. The King eagerly desired the conversion of his Court (*cura teipsum*). Since the wars of the League there had been, according to Henry, two great spiritual evils. Men said: "God takes no interest whatever in human affairs." There had been so much suffering that men cried out with the Psalmist in the tempest of his soul, "Where art thou, O my God?" and this tendency to believe that God takes no interest in the human race was easily spread by the philosophy of Charron and Montaigne.

Henry IV deplored such a state of mind. "Moreover," said he, "there are others driven to despair by the thought that piety is impossible. There are men at my Court who say, 'How can a man work out his salvation?' To be saved, a man must walk down the Rue St Honoré and become a Capuchin; a man must shut himself up in a cell, just as one of ourselves has done — Father Angéus de Joyeuse¹ — with a skull on the table in front of him; on such conditions a man may be saved, but it is utterly impossible to be holy and lead a life at Court. It is perfectly useless to make the attempt." Henry IV pointed out these two facts to St Francis de Sales. He went on: "What if you wrote a book to show the presence of God in all human affairs? It is not permissible to go on, as Montaigne has

¹. Henry, Count of Bouchage, son of William de Joyeuse, Lieutenant-General of Languedoc, and Marie de Batamay. He was born in 1563, and on the death of his wife he joined the Capuchins in September, 1587. On the death of his brother in 1592 he was appointed, at the request of the people, Governor of Languedoc, and held the office from 1592 to 1599. On his way back from Rome to France he died at Rivoli, near Turin, on September 28, 1608.

done, as if the Incarnation had never taken place, and, even if it were so, we must put Montaigne aside. Human reason cannot tolerate the idea of the absence of God from daily life, as if we had nobody to rely on but ourselves. Did not our Lord come to make our interests his very own? We want a book to show that God is interested in all human affairs, to show that piety is open to all, and may be reconciled with everyday duties; wherever there is a duty to be performed, that duty is a path to God. The father or mother of a family has duties towards society. These are not obstacles, they are helps, because life is made up of duties, and life was given to us to raise us to God. So write a book to show God takes his part in our lives, and that everyday existence is compatible with a devout life."

St Francis's reply to the King's request was his *Introduction to a Devout Life*, published in 1608. It is a charming and winning book. Montaigne's *Essays* are delightful; in them we have a man speaking out his whole mind carelessly, but with a very artistic and studied carelessness; he is simply trying to amuse himself, and he talks for the sake of talking about himself. There is something unique about him, something indefinable; he is very amusing, but after a certain number of pages you have had enough of it, just like a child who has been playing the whole day long. Montaigne's *Essays* are like taking a stroll, but a stroll only from the Madeleine to the Bastille; nothing speaks of God; quite the contrary, there are certain chapters that move one to ask: "Has prayer any meaning? Is repentance a convention?" You feel quite sad and chilled. You say to yourself: "All that is just knocking at the door; if I am really as dead as the daughter of Jairus, there is no use in bringing along the flute-players; it is the physician who is needed to say: 'She is not dead, but sleepeth.'"

What a difference between this book and St Francis's! Men of the world might have placed the *Introduction* on their table, between the *Essays*, which had just come out, and the *Astrée*,¹ which was to be

¹. *Astrée* was a romantic novel written by Honoré d'Urfé which had a great vogue in the early part of the seventeenth century. It was published in several parts; the first appeared in 1610, a second in 1612, a third in 1619. Its success was immense

published two years later. Read this old-fashioned book. There is no better way of knowing St Francis de Sales than learning from himself. Hamon's¹ life of the saint is most interesting and full of facts, but you should read himself, and if you do you will love him. He is loved as Alexander loved his Homer, for which he had a box made of cedar and gold. St Francis de Sales is not an Achilles whose wrath hurled many souls into hell, but he is rather like Ulysses, who, through many wanderings, is ever seeking for his fatherland. Like Orpheus, he escapes the Siren's song by singing a more beautiful one of his own. He wishes to make piety more lovable than the charms of this world. He should be known by listening to him speaking to himself; a writer reveals more of himself by his manner of speaking than by what he says....

His books are also interesting. You read them with as much interest as you would a novel, and yet they are true. The attention is held; I do not say we are amused, but we are forced to observe ourselves, and we feel that human nature is known, aided, and uplifted.

St Francis de Sales did for piety what Racine did for poetry, for Racine made harmonious verse look easy. We say to ourselves: "It is quite simple; at any rate I could do that much." Little by little the obstacles between piety and ourselves grow smaller; there seems to be a sort of unity about piety. It is always mounting heavenwards, and, in the end, the precipices are surmounted and the paths made straight. You follow St Francis and are infinitely charmed, however little you may like his simple psychology. Perhaps he is a bit too flowery; there is too much imagery; one illustration springs from another, but they are all very pretty. St Francis de Sales must not be blamed for this; mystical writers are forced to have recourse to images to represent things, to express the soul's experience. Such a style of writing may, perhaps, sink to namby-pambyism; it is bound to have awkward imitators. I can see one already. (In this respect

throughout the whole of Europe.

¹. M. Hamon, Curé of St Sulpice.

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Camus¹ is like Xenophon for a person who wishes to know about Socrates.) St Francis de Sales said: “You should write some pious stories.” Camus wrote them with the pen of a magpie; he wrote *Julia*, *The Dove*, or *Guilty Innocence*, etc. There are a hundred and eighty volumes of them in a style that is an imitation of St Francis de Sales. It is a flashy, superficial style. But the *Introduction to a Devout Life* itself is a charming work that raises the mind, and is as attractive as a child. However little a soul may wish to be gained and led on to a devout life, it is won, and is already well on the way.

¹. Jean Pierre Camus de Port Carré, Bishop of Belley (1584-1652), was a close friend of St Francis de Sales from the time he first met him in 1609. He published a work on the spirit of St Francis de Sales (1641), portions of which have been translated into English under the title of *The Spirit of St Francis de Sales*.

ST FRANCIS DE SALES AS A SPIRITUAL GUIDE¹

MADAME DE CHANTAL.

On last Sunday we began to talk about St Francis de Sales. I should like go to on to-day, not talking so much, as thinking aloud with the dear young friends whom I am addressing, whom I never lose sight of. As a rule, it is to them I address myself. I prepare my lectures in the form of a dialogue with my youngest hearers, watching how my ideas take shape, and trying to think along with them, so as to turn their attention to certain subjects.

We spoke about what St Francis de Sales really was. Plato talks about men shut up in a cave, who do not see things as they are in themselves, but only the shadows of them. Now a saint, and St Francis de Sales in particular, is like a ray of sunlight, a beam from the crib of the Infant Jesus, a ray of our Lord's heart, when he says: "I am meek and humble of heart." I have already told you that a saint is an image of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Church, to make use of an illustration that Bossuet² continually repeats (it is one of his favourite ideas) — the Church, I say, who is the widow of her Spouse, I mean Jesus Christ, loves to meet him again. She cannot get on without a glimpse of him, and so our Lord gives himself, not only in the Eucharist, but he also gives images of himself — and these are the saints — in order to console her, by helping her to reconstruct the image of her Well-Beloved. I pointed out to you how a saint's

¹. December 22, 1878.

². Bossuet, Jacques Benigne (1627-1704), born at Dijon, studied at the College of Navarre and the Sorbonne. After his ordination he went to Metz and began his career as a great preacher. In 1657 he went to Paris and was appointed tutor to the Dauphin. His literary output was enormous, and according to Faguet his is the most beautiful of all French oratorical styles. He was nominated to the bishopric of Condom, afterwards to that of Meaux, where he died aged seventy-seven.

birthday is a festival: *In nativitate ejus multi gaudebunt* {‘many will rejoice at his birth’, Luke 1:14}. Now that is what happened when St Francis de Sales was born.

LOVE: THE MOTIVE POWER OF ALL THINGS.

From the historical point of view he stands out in contrast with Calvin¹ at Geneva, the embodiment of the rigid and severe Protestant ideal. Calvin was gifted—highly gifted—but narrow; he rather resembled the conventional costume of the French sixteenth-century Protestant—a stiff collar to keep the head straight, that allows no ease, or grace of movement. St Francis de Sales was Calvin’s anti-type; there was something more perfect about him, less constrained, more animated; it was not fear that led him to God, but love which became the soul of all his actions. He does not seek for God in the remote past; he is Emmanuel—God with us—God ever abiding with us in his Church.

Perfection, as St Francis de Sales understands it, was not Montaigne’s ideal. But is a saint, whose every deed is alive with the spirit of Christ, a less lovable person? Is his a lower ideal than that which used to be called “an honest man”? Is a saint a less pleasing companion? The politeness of a saint, perfected as it is by charity, has something more lovable and refined about it than Montaigne’s or Charron’s ideal. La Rochefoucauld² was afraid of being fooled; that was the great evil he dreaded: “From the disgrace of being fooled, preserve me, O Lord.” That is the underlying note of all his maxims; the heart must be held in check, the soul must be restrained, lest it be duped. It’s a bleak sort of economy. It would be much better to be duped in the company of St Francis de Sales. He was frequently

¹ Jean Calvin, born at Noyon in 1509, died at Geneva in 1564; “the greatest of Protestant divines,” his *Institutio*, published in 1536, “is the standard of orthodox Protestant belief in all the Churches known as the ‘Reformed.’”

² François, Duc de la Rochefoucauld (1613–1680), took a prominent part in the first Fronde; “the greatest maxim writer of France and one of her best memoir writers.” The *Maximes* were published in 1665.

deceived, but a soul which spends itself, lavishes itself, whose wealth is in this way being ever renewed by our Lord, is beloved. Blessed is the man who lavishes the riches of his soul. This is the ideal which it has pleased our Lord to confront with the cold ideal of the philosopher.

St Francis, moreover, by his books and spiritual direction, gives an answer to the Jansenist theory and practice of holy living, to the cold and false system of direction that ends in the estrangement from God through dint of fearing him. "Fear," says Pascal, criticising the Jansenists without wishing to do so, "fear must not stifle love." St Francis, you observe, places God everywhere. The Jansenists build a secret oratory for themselves at the end of a long gallery, in which everything conduces to fear; they go there from time to time; it is draped entirely in black, and makes one's flesh creep; there is a crucifix in it, and one is stricken with dread. They go there from time to time to hear a sermon or two and be piously bored, and God is isolated from the rest of their lives. That, indeed, is not the Jansenist ideal. It would be unjust to say so, but that is what Jansenist maxims lead to. By the way, this is a great help to worldly people, because they can thus keep their lives separate from God. St Francis de Sales, on the other hand, brings Christ into every department of life, and he makes the intention of pleasing God the soul of all our actions. Christ will thus take a share in our whole life, will sustain us in the fulfilment of its duties, and be the soul of our every good deed.

"The spiritual life," says Bossuet, "was relegated to the cloister," it was looked on as utterly foreign to a life led in the world. St Francis de Sales was chosen to go and bring it forth from its retreat ... he led it back, dressed in ordinary garb, with the cross, the thorns, suffering and detachment in its train. The most austere religious could recognise it for what it really was, and the most disillusioned courtier, even though he might not love it, could not but esteem it. Our Lord said he was the Saviour of all, and there is no condition in life in which one may not find the path to Paradise.

HIS TRANQUILLITY OF SOUL.

Now for another characteristic trait—his tranquillity of soul. There are certain souls (we shall see this in the case of the Jansenists) who wish to find the source of tranquillity in themselves; they will never find it there. They would like to cast anchor in the depths of their own spirit, but that is such a poor unstable depth that the anchor will never get a firm hold ... the anchor must be cast upwards, not downwards; hope must be founded on God, on his loving-kindness. That is the “true fixed and resting point.” We do not rely on ourselves on account of our own goodness, but we rely on God because he is goodness itself. This thought is the key to many passages in St Francis de Sales; it is the very spirit of his system of direction. Those who were led by this spirit were sometimes surprised and slightly disturbed at finding themselves so much at ease in a devout life; they asked themselves: “Am I not walking along the broad highway, and not along the narrow path?” The reason for this is that God gives a certain peace of mind to a state of abandonment that no longer relies on self, but on God. This state of tranquillity means: “You are on the right road.” It is like a sign-post telling us, “There lies the right road,” and so we find ourselves not necessarily gay—gaiety is irreconcilable with much temptation—but at our ease, and this peace of mind is a proof that the soul has cast its care on God.

IS THIS EASY DEVOTION?

St Francis de Sales did not bring about a decline in spiritual direction, which has a history all to itself, and which the seventeenth century was much concerned with. You will come across attacks on “easy devotion” from all sides. Towards the end of the century there was, indeed, a decline, a sort of easy-going attitude towards piety. The life had gone out of it, only the husk remained; it was even mingled with a kind of hypocrisy, and too often consisted only of lifeless formulas. This it was, according to Michelet, which compromised true devotion. He wrote a remarkably clever, though dishonest, chap-

ter on the subject ... playing the rôle of the devil, who did not believe in Job's holiness. St Francis de Sales, he asserts, reconciles God and the world; this was the source of that easy devotion which went on declining until it reached Molinos — that is to say, the most dangerous and guilty illusions — which ended, as Boileau said, in finding the pleasures of hell within the arms of God. Nothing is more untrue. On the contrary, St Francis de Sales keeps the will perpetually at work; piety, according to him, consists in the fulfilment of a number of duties.

Does he deserve the reproaches brought against the Casuists? Casuistry is a branch of moral theology; it is based on the faith revealed by God, it is an application of principles to those different cases of conscience that may arise. The seventeenth century was the age of great Casuists, such as Reginald,¹ Lessius,² and others. When properly used, there is nothing objectionable about it, but it may bring with it dangers of its own. A man who spends his whole life compiling cases of conscience is not living in a healthy atmosphere. I should no more condemn myself to read the folio volumes of some theologians who treat of the thorny questions that lay bare the ugliness of human life than I should condemn myself to read all the police reports. Diana's³ six thousand summarised cases in four big volumes (he called it a summary!) and other such works are not healthy reading. It is an atmosphere that cannot be breathed for any length of time. A layman may be scandalised at seeing such and such a case, or such and such a decision out of its context, as Pascal so treacherously did. As for myself, I went through much mental agony when reading the *Provincial Letters*. I used to ask myself: "Did

¹ V. Reginald, S.J., a Frenchman (1543–1623). His most important work, a treatise on how to hear confessions. *Praxis fori paenitentialis*, was commended by St Francis de Sales.

² Leonard Lessius, S.J. (1554–1623), a Belgian, wrote equally well on moral and dogmatic theology. In a letter dated August 26, 1613, St Francis de Sales praised in particular his treatises *De Justitia* and *De Praedestinatione*.

³ Antonio Diana (1585–1663) was a member of the Theatine order. Of his *Resolutiones Morales* A. Lehmkuhl, S.J., remarks that his solutions of moral problems were inclined to be too mild.

theologians really write that?" When I verified the texts, I saw at once that there was no foundation for this (but at the same time one has to have recourse to the texts to be certain); just one little word was missing, just one little circumstance that altered the whole affair, and then such or such a decision, profoundly immoral in one case, was perfectly correct in another. Casuistry, as a science, cannot be condemned, but it may, if it be abused. Through dint of observing nothing but human baseness one may come to terms with it, and we may end by being too mild and a little bit lax. I am well aware that some Casuists had a moral code that was not at all severe, but Casuistry should not be held responsible for them.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF ABANDONMENT OF THE WILL?

There was nothing of that sort of morality about St Francis de Sales. Michelet upbraids him for seeking to destroy the will. Not at all; he asked for an abandonment of the will to God, but such abandonment requires an act of the will.... How many souls are there who feel the need of it? One of the greatest mental tortures is that of asking oneself if one is where God wishes one to be. When God sends us an illness, when circumstances make an obligation manifestly clear, then such distress of mind vanishes, and the soul is at rest.

Many souls experience a need for obedience, for self-oblation, for abandonment, in order that their wills may be at rest. They are like a child that wishes to write, and does not know how to. It asks its father, and the father takes hold of the child's hand; and the greater the docility of the child, and the suppleness of its hand, the less will be its resistance to its father's action on it, and, moreover, the clearer will be the writing, the better will be the reproduction of the father's fine penmanship, and the less will it be like that of a child who does not know how to write.

Abandonment of the will, as recommended by Bossuet, is like that. It is a question of abandoning one's own will by an energetic act of the will itself. This is no attempt at directing the director, as a

writer, who pokes fun at directors and direction, remarked. In such a case there would be no real abandonment, but merely a subtle triumph of the will. According to St Francis de Sales and Bossuet, such abandonment does not lead to the slightest weakening of will power. In such a case the will is not passive, but active. To permit oneself to be directed, in spite of the opposing obstacles that rise up in one's heart, demands a powerful, unwavering act of the will.

The soul can weave a fabric out of two sorts of material. It may weave a heavenly garment out of threads woven by the art and craft of obedience, a precious fabric, interwoven, as the Fathers say, with the wool of the Lamb—the grace of Jesus Christ. This is the garment of the elect, woven, thread by thread, from acts of the will surrendered and abandoned to the Life that inspires and guides all.

But the soul may weave another sort of garment—a garment woven from acts of the heart and will, in which obedience has had no part. And instead of forming a heavenly garment, these threads of self-will, closely connected together, make a fabric as thick as a winding-sheet in which the pent-up soul can no longer breathe. Apply this to lying. A man tells a lie, and then another, and so gets a bent towards lying.... In the same way, idleness enshrouds the soul by a series of negligent actions, and, as a result, the soul can no longer move.

St Francis de Sales wishes to teach us how to make use of these threads of everyday life by being obedient to the hand of the divine Weaver. And if our hand submits itself to his hand, we shall not have woven shroud of bad habits. That was his system of direction—an active abandonment of the will demanding great energy of soul and perpetual self-control.

If now we were to ask him what was his most prominent characteristic, he would answer that he was *affectionate*. He was most affectionate; he had the tenderness which is the mark of holy souls. Of course there are devout people who are naturally dry. "Pious" people are a preacher's pet aversion. Bourdaloue makes an interesting remark about them. "Their zeal," he says, "does not eat them up;

it eats up others." But, as a rule, the two qualities, tenderness and purity, are to be found together; purity preserves tenderness, and tenderness is renewed by purity. Tenderness vanishes if it be abused; there is nothing harder than the heart of a young man who, lest he be cruel towards some, will be horribly so towards those whom he is bound to love, such as his wife or mother.

St Francis de Sales was very tender-hearted, with a tenderness vivified by purity and made divine by friendship. Friendship is an emotion that reveals the riches of the heart. There are some young people who reduce friendship to mere companionship; but this is not friendship. St Francis de Sales lived by friendship; he had friends whom he loved dearly and tenderly, and they were his friends for all time. One of his sayings is: "To love truly and to be able to cease loving truly are incompatible." What a beautiful remark! Friendship is a flower that buds in this life, but which is destined to blossom in the eternal springtime that we call heaven. It arises from common tastes and sympathies. When a pure and tender heart loves such another, then good is multiplied by good.

You may see such friendships shining around St Francis de Sales. You may say of them that they are eternal friendships, because God is their author; He is their strength, and he will be their crown. In the seventeenth century, especially in the beginning of it, there was much idealism and spontaneity—men pursued great and noble passions, noble affections; they gloried in exalting what they loved. But such lofty passions were somewhat tinged by conventional ideas. Consider Corneille, think of the most refined romances—*La Princesse de Clèves*, for example—and you will see a conviction in them that love is something caught suddenly, as if in a flash of lightning. St Francis de Sales, on the contrary, struck the right note, he had the true ideal of affection.

I am coming now to a friendship of a rather more delicate nature, one which has found no censor except, perhaps, M. Michelet—I mean the friendship between St Francis de Sales and St Chantal.

I shall not tell you the story of St Chantal; it would need a whole

lesson to itself. She was born at Dijon, the daughter of President Fremiot, and was a little older than St Francis. She saw him for the first time in 1604 (this fact does not prevent Michelet from attributing to her influence certain procedures adopted in Paris by St Francis in 1602; I mention this just to let you see how Michelet allows his imagination to run away with the facts). Madame de Chantal was not a bit like St Francis de Sales, but she had the same desires and aspirations, and no better understanding is ever arrived at than between persons of different characters and like aspirations. She was a whole-hearted creature, direct, strong, uncompromising, intense—that is the right word—intense. St Francis de Sales had, in a way, to act on Madame de Chantal as a man who works one diamond against another—I mean he had to get her to work against herself. He showed marvellous patience and firmness in his task. You may see him at work in the same way with the first Visitation nuns, who were by no means the simpering type that Gresset¹ tries to make out:

“The Visitation Nuns, you'll find.
Are most polite and so refined!...”

Consider Mother Faure! She was a strong-minded woman, a little impulsive, and very determined about getting her own way; she was not a simpering sort of woman. As a young girl she had an ideal: she wanted to be a widow. Just think of that! To be a widow meant for her: “I don't want to be an old maid, but I have no desire to be under the rule of a husband.” She was converted at a ball, which was for her the road to Damascus. Such were the souls over whom St Francis exercised a powerful sway, such was the type of persons whom he directed. The story of the first Mothers of the Visitation, which is well worth reading, has been perfectly told by Mother de

¹. Jean Baptiste Gresset (1709-1777) joined the Jesuit order, but was expelled from it chiefly owing to complaints of the frivolity of his poem *Vert-vert*, the work on which his literary reputation depends.

Chaugy,¹ who has written remarkably penetrating and delicately shaded psychological studies of them. Madame de Chantal was very positive, and not a bit of a day-dreamer. She had been a most affectionate wife, a careful mother, and a good housewife—very economical, as a matter of fact. You may see this from the way she managed the property left her by her husband, the Bourbilly estate.

St Francis de Sales took souls as he found them in the midst of their ordinary duties, and, aided by grace, which transforms without changing, he sought to elevate nature without entirely altering it. Grace will transform a gentle, tender soul into one that loves God above all; it will remove the littleness and weaknesses of excessive tenderness, replacing them by a gracious affection that will win hearts. Grace adapts itself to nature in order to transform it.

St Francis de Sales found in Madame de Chantal an *adjutorium simile sibi* {‘helper like him’, Gen 2:18} in one respect, but *dissimile* {unlike} in others. He was in no hurry to deal with this soul. A director is represented as a man in a great hurry to get his hook into people. St Francis de Sales studied Madame de Chantal for three years; he even sent her away, and tried her in every possible way, and it was only when he saw she was a strong soul that wished to belong to God, and not to self, that, together with her, he conceived the plan of the Visitation Order. When he saw such noble souls about him, he said to himself: “Why not form a people, a nation of noble souls? Why not give this chosen race a code of laws? Why not establish a family that will go down through the centuries?”

The Visitation Order sprang from this idea.

St Francis de Sales was not, like M. Olier, called on to establish seminaries, for he believed himself unfitted for the task; he remarked that he had tried to, but had succeeded in making only a priest and a half! His idea was, with the help of Madame de Chantal, to establish the Visitation Order.

¹. *Life of St Jane Frances de Chantal*, by Mother de Chaugy, London, Richardson and Son, 1852.

We can see her beside him just like St Scholastica beside St Benedict. St Scholastica established the first Benedictine nuns at Subiaco, close to her brother's monastery.

You may see the same thing at Assisi! St Francis is the Gospel brought to life; to see him is to see our Lord himself travelling in poverty from the Crib to Calvary. Very well, then! Alongside St Francis you see St Clare, his spiritual daughter, the Prioress of St Damian's. Clare, we are told, desired something very much — she wanted to dine just once with St Francis, but he always refused. In the end his companions pointed out to him that he ought to let her have this little pleasure. "Won't you make this little sacrifice for Sister Clare, who has done so much for you, who has made so many sacrifices for your sake?" In the end St Francis yielded. So, one day, they sat down to dinner, and St Francis began talking about God and he went on talking about God; it was the first course, the second course, and the dessert; it was a meal at which angels waited. Consider the brotherliness and holy affection of St Francis and St Clare.

You may see the same thing blossoming around St Catherine of Siena. She, like St Teresa, was a virile soul. Her companions regarded her as an angel, as a mother who, in prayer and sufferings, had borne them to our Lord.

In the life of M. Olier you will find, far away from the point of view of distance, but quite close through prayer, Mother Agnes de Langeac, the source of his most heavenly aspirations — *adjutorium simile sibi*. God might have created us directly, but he makes use of our fathers and mothers for the work, uniting us to them by infinitely gracious bonds. He could save us directly, but he saves us by the help of certain souls who received life before us, and gave it to us because they love us.

This was the link between St Francis de Sales and Madame de Chantal, who, whilst still seeking the way, found a heart to guide her and bring her further on to Christ. This is St Paul's expression: *Ego vos genui in Christo*. {'I have begotten you in Christ', 1 Cor 4:15}. A spiritual relationship of rare graciousness, utterly supernatural in its

character—which had God for its author—was established between them. She called St Francis her “father.” On one occasion, when God had stricken her with grief, the father, in his turn, perceiving the presence of God in her soul, caught a glimpse of what God had placed therein for his own spiritual development and upbringing. He began by calling her his “daughter,” and afterwards he called her “mother.” On the day his own mother died he wrote to St Chantal (Michelet was scandalised at it): “I am writing to you, to whom I have given her place in my memento at Mass, without omitting the one you have already.”

Nineteen years after the death of St Francis de Sales his tomb was opened, and he lay there calmly and serenely. St Chantal did not dare touch him, because it was forbidden to do so; she kept watch with her nuns at the open tomb. At length she was permitted to approach. She placed the saint’s hand upon her head, and it seemed to her that the hand was living and impressed a blessing on her brow. It was love stronger than death, a love in God that will last for ever, a love that knows no limits. This fact also scandalised Michelet. “There is the proof of what I say,” he remarked; “that is a love that lasts beyond the grave.” That is true, but it is a love which is utterly pure. Would Chateaubriand not have done the same if he were standing by his mother’s grave when he said: “I wept and I believed”? Would he not have taken her hand? And would he not have felt it move in benediction? It is an emotion so genuine and holy that no one should dare condemn it!

Of course it is perfectly true that we should not easily believe ourselves St Chantals. Such an affection is like an Alpine flower growing on the mountain top where there is no other earthly vegetation, where all is bare and austere. It is no longer earthly, but heavenly, and it lives on sunlight. Such was the affection of St Chantal. St Vincent de Paul made no mistake about it, and he had been her spiritual guide, to whom she had confided the secrets of her soul. Now St Vincent de Paul was an austere saint; he is rather reserved, and I tremble a little in his presence and am rather afraid. When he conversed with a woman, he did so at a distance that was even a little

bit more than respectful. He was asked to pay a visit to Mademoiselle le Gras—the foundress of the Daughters of Charity—when she lay on her death-bed, and he declined. Such austerity makes one shudder a little. Looked at in this light, he may not seem very attractive, but it is the “gold beneath the wood.” How tender and sensitive is he in all that concerns the Church! Anything heroic makes his heart beat faster; it beats faster at the mention of Ireland, Brittany, Lorraine. Richelieu¹ was a conqueror, rather like the false mother at the judgement of Solomon, who was willing to have the child divided in two. St Vincent laid it down that Lorraine belonged to France that France might benefit her, and he poured out treasures of charity on Lorraine. Such is the heart of a saint, tender beneath an austere surface.

Very well, then, St Vincent was not the man to approve of a sentimental attachment, and yet he smiled on this affection. He was no dreamer. After St Chantal’s death in 1641 he saw her soul in the form of a fiery globe, and a larger globe, which was the soul of St Francis de Sales, coming down from heaven and absorbing the lesser one. Such was the vision of St Vincent de Paul, and the testimony he bore to St Chantal. Michelet says: “Look at the sadness of Madame de Chantal; after St Francis de Sales’ death she just dragged along with an arrow in her heart, and a wound from which she never recovered.”

Well, I am now going to read to you her portrait as drawn by St Vincent de Paul. (Oh! his French is not like Bossuet’s ... but all the same I would have preferred to listen to St Vincent de Paul speaking at Saint Lazare than to hear Bossuet preach.)

“She was full of faith, although all her life long she had been tormented with thoughts against it.” (How dreadful! Here is a saint, well advanced in life, who had St Francis de Sales for a friend and

¹ Armand Jean du Plessis, Cardinal and Duc de Richelieu (1585-1642), the French statesman who laid the foundation of France's greatness during the seventeenth century. His policy consisted in the “domestic unification of France” and “opposition to the house of Austria.” He founded the French Academy in 1637.

spiritual guide, whom he called his mother, and yet she was tempted during her whole life by thoughts against the faith. How dreadful! And yet how consoling!) “Although she apparently enjoyed that peace and tranquillity of mind possessed by souls who have attained a high degree of virtue, yet she suffered such great interior trials that she often told me her mind was so filled with all sorts of temptations and abominations that her constant endeavour was to turn away from the sight of her own interior state, as she was unable to bear with herself; and the sight of her soul filled her with horror, as if it were an image of hell.” (It is consoling; we see saints smiling, and persons praying peacefully, but only just consider what is going on in the depths of their souls!) “Nevertheless, though she thus suffered, her countenance never lost its serene expression, nor did she once relax in the fidelity God demanded of her. Hence I regard her as one of the holiest souls I have ever met with on this earth.”

You see to what she attributes her distress: to those dreadful trials that God wrought in her spirit; added to this a restlessness of soul that was its own torment, a distaste for the world, and a sadness that is designed to make the soul homesick for heaven.

* * * * *

Let us get back to St Francis de Sales. He was the founder, then, with Madame de Chantal, of a new order, the Visitation, which so spread and multiplied that, at her death, there were eighty-six convents. There were two in Paris, one in the Rue Saint Antoine, where there is now a Lutheran Church. Madame L’Huillier lived there; she had a fear, that grew into an obsession, of becoming a Visitation nun, and it was this fear, in which she saw the mark of a vocation, that induced her to enter. The other convent was at Chaillot, where the Trocadero now stands. Henrietta of England, daughter of Henry IV, resided there. It was she who thanked God for having made her an unhappy Queen, because sorrow had taught her a lesson that royalty could never have taught her. Louise Moustier de le Fayette was the superioress; Madame de Sévigné used to call on

her there. There were many visitors to these convents which left their mark on Paris and many other cities.

When Michelet considers these foundations, his heart grows heavy. He is sorry for Paris because it had such a clerical atmosphere, such an old-maidish look. *Caveant ædiles* {Let the *ædiles* (officials in charge of public order, among other things) beware}!... He must have been consoled on leaving this world. As a matter of fact, what criticism can be brought against these convents? A Visitation convent is not like a Carmelite one, where penance and mortification are the sources of its life and movement. It is the kind of life that might produce boredom, were the love of God not present; a dull sort of life for a strong soul, were the spirit of sacrifice absent. May there not be a great deal of pettiness in such places? I should like for a moment to become the devil's advocate. There are some religious persons, rather narrow-minded, who see only their own little convent and its circle in the whole world. Is that the fault of the convent? No. Those who say, "My order," "My convent," would have said in the world, "My family," "My country." It is the *ego*, more or less transformed.

There is another, graver, criticism! They do not appreciate the goodness to be found in the world. They seem to themselves to be in a Noah's ark, and they put their noses to the window and only see a deluge of evil. A priest judges differently; he sees souls at closer range. Father de Condren, the second General of the Oratory, said that he did not believe there were nobler souls in the first centuries of the Church than those he saw round about him at the beginning of the seventeenth. Such nuns do not take into consideration the souls whom God keeps in the world for himself, or the sublimity of their vocation. They do not see it, and they think that only themselves are saved. Is that the fault of the cloister? Certainly not. They look on their own convent as if it were the whole world, that's all. Can't the same thing be observed in drawing-rooms? How petty was the outlook of the Hôtel Pisani, which had just been thrown open under Henry IV — it was the germ of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. When they read *Polyeucte* there, they despised the husband's love for

his wife because it was not according to the rules; it was not to be found in the "Kingdom of Romance."

There are some nuns who are inclined to condemn the ordinary vocation of the human race. There was one of the Arnauld family, Anthony Lemaître, who fell in love with a girl whom he wished to marry. It was such an affection as may be found in noble souls; he wrote about it to his aunt, Mother Agnes. When you look at Mother Agnes's beautiful portrait in the Louvre, you can see that she was charming; but read the letter she wrote to her nephew, with its feline scratch: "You are now become as indifferent to me as in the past you were dear. I was joined to you in the bonds of friendship.... For the future I shall love you with Christian charity. But as you will now be leading an ordinary life I shall have a very ordinary affection for you. The venerable sacrament of matrimony for which you have such great devotion..." (She is ironical about the sacrament!) We should not have the spirit of the Church if we did not eulogise virginity, but there is nothing to prevent us from seeing the beauty of every divine vocation. This letter gives a glimpse of a kink due to the mind and not to the convent.

The Visitation nuns have been criticised for loving trifles and little devotional receipts. But this community attracted women like Henrietta of France, a strong and interesting personality. There was no one who stood up as proudly to Richelieu as Mary Felicia des Ursins, whose husband was beheaded in 1632; it was she who founded the Visitation convent at Moulins. A large number of strong characters are to be found in the congregation. They were not soft and supple characters. (Ambition is supple.) They were hardy plants that manifested the fruitfulness of the soil and the vigour of the sap.

THE REVIVAL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL SPIRIT IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY¹ I

ONE of the chief preoccupations of the seventeenth century was the priesthood and the training of the clergy; it was the dominant idea, the work of works.

In 1611, a year after Henry IV's death, there were three men whom this idea brought together — M. Bourdoise,² St Vincent de Paul, and Fr. de Bérulle.³ They were about the same age (thirty years) and they were animated with the same desire — the welfare of the Church. Our Lord Jesus Christ loved his Church, and in every age there are priests, too, who love the Church, who grieve over the failings of its ministers, and desire to restore the beauty of former days. Fr. de Bérulle brought St Vincent de Paul and M. Bourdoise together with this object in view. He induced them to make a retreat, and when it was over they exchanged ideas.

This was M. Bourdoise's idea: he thought that the priests who were living amongst the people were wanting in decorum. At this time there was a very large number of priests who would not have dared to wear the soutane. Parishes were left without clergy. M.

¹. February 16, 1879.

². Adrien Bourdoise (1584-1655) established a community of priests known as the Nicolaites, from the name of the parish of Saint Nicholas du Chardonnet, in which they resided. He was highly esteemed by St Vincent de Paul; Bourdoise recommended the Duc de Liancourt to consult the Saint on the appointment of benefices of which the Duke was patron.

³. Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629) is chiefly remarkable for the foundation of the Oratory in France in 1611, his negotiations for the marriage of Charles I to Henrietta Maria (May, 1625), whom he accompanied to England, establishing a small Oratorian colony in London, and his success in introducing the Carmelite nuns into France (October 15, 1604). He was created Cardinal in August, 1627, and died on October 2, 1629.

Bourdoise, who was sprung from country folk, who were not very well off, was very much struck by this fact. He had been a choir-boy in a small church near Chartres; he scarcely knew how to read when he was ten years of age, but all the same he read during Mass on Sexagesima Sunday¹ the Epistle that treats of St Paul, that great sower, and he felt called on to remain within the Church of God. A special feature of this vocation was a love for the beauty of God's house; there is just a little touch of the beadle or the sacristan about such a vocation. Before he was able to carry it out he had to undergo many trials, and, at one time, he was even a footman on a lady's coach; she took him to balls, and he left her as soon as he could. M. Bourdoise had taken to heart the idea of reviving clerical decorum and dignity. It was not exactly the priest he had in view, but the parish—the parish organised with such order and regularity as to touch the hearts of the faithful and remove every ground for criticism. "What strikes me," said M. Bourdoise, "is the need for establishing communities of priests in parishes, in order to carry out the divine services in a dignified manner, and to establish decorum amongst the clergy." When he looked at the churches he thought of our Lord in the temple at Jerusalem, driving out the money changers and purifying the temple.

Fr. de Bérulle had another idea—namely, to bring together priests, in whom the spirit, which he felt living within himself, the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, might live; to bring them together in a sort of cenacle; to kindle a flame by bringing the pieces of fuel more closely together, to form them into a congregation. Bound together by charity, they were to live as the Apostles had lived with our Lord, receiving the spirit of the priesthood from association with the great, the only priest, Jesus Christ. When the disciples went looking for the Saviour, they asked him : "*Domine, ubi habitas?*" {'Lord, where dwellest thou?', John 1:38} And he replied: "*Venite et videte*" {'Come, and see'}; and henceforward they lived in the company of the divine Master. Up to the very day of their ordination

¹. 2 Corinthians, from verse 19, ch. xi, to verse 9, ch. xii.

in the supper room they had been formed on this example, by his teaching, and much more by receiving from himself the breath of life; Fr. de Bérulle wished to bring priests together in a sort of supper-room, which would be called the Oratory¹ (a place of prayer and recollection). There they were to be formed to the ecclesiastical spirit, and then they were to be placed at the disposal of the Bishops, each one to be disposed of according to his abilities and capacities. So Fr. de Bérulle's model was our Lord training his priests, the Word Incarnate, living, not at a distance, merely to set an example, but living within the priest so as to communicate his own life to him, to make corporate with himself the priest whom he intended to make a fellow-priest, a fellow-victim, a fellow-guide and shepherd.

Such was Fr. de Bérulle's vision, the greatest reality of all.

St Vincent de Paul had another plan; what he wanted was missionaries. His thoughts were occupied with souls, and if Fr. de Bérulle said, "All for God for the sake of souls," St Vincent's motto was: "All for souls for the sake of God." He saw the poor folk as our Lord had seen them, as flocks abandoned to all sorts of evils because they were in need of shepherds. This was the sight which had met the eyes of the Apostles on those first missions of which they gave an account to our Lord. St Vincent de Paul's vision was that of the lost sheep on the shoulders of the Good Shepherd, and his aim was to train shepherds to walk in the footsteps of the Great Shepherd and recover the lost sheep.

These three men, each in his own way, and with different ideals, had a mighty influence on the formation of the ecclesiastical spirit in seventeenth-century France.

Cardinal de Bérulle had a spiritual son who worked out this idea in greater detail. De Bérulle had the Incarnate Word in view. Fr. de Condren² looked on our Lord as a priest from the very fact of his

^{1.} In 1611 Bérulle and his first companions took possession of a house in the Rue Saint Jacques, almost opposite to the Carmelite monastery, which was previously known as the Petit-Bourbon. It was the cradle of the Oratory (R.).

^{2.} Charles du Bois de Condren was born near Soissons in 1588, and died in Paris

having been made flesh; if he took upon himself a body and soul like ours, he did so that he might offer them up as a sacrifice; his soul was in an abiding disposition of offering to God all that God had a right to demand of it by way of prayer, satisfaction, reparation, and thanksgiving. When Isaac was climbing up Mount Moriah, he asked where was the victim. But our Lord knew what was the victim; it was his will to make an oblation of his own humanity. He made an offering, and the offering was himself; he was both priest and victim, and as such he had been presented to the Apostles: "*Ecce Agnus Dei*; Behold the Lamb of God." Fr. de Condren *lived* this idea, and he seems to have devoted himself to honour the hidden life of our Lord. He wrote scarcely any books; he wrote in souls; he penetrated into the meaning of the priesthood and the sacrifice of Christ, of our Lord's demand, not so much for priests as for victims, mediators in spirit and office, as he himself was so essentially from the very fact of his Incarnation.

And Fr. de Condren, in turn, trained up a spiritual son, M. Olier, the founder of St Sulpice. You may thus see how the establishment of seminaries is linked up with Fr. de Bérulle. He scattered the seed, which may be found, indeed, everywhere in the Church's teachings, but, at the same time, the man who selects an idea, and sets it out in splendour, deserves praise. Fr. de Condren developed and specialised this idea, and M. Olier carried it out, for he saw the priesthood abiding in the Eucharist, and he established the seminary of St Sulpice to be, as it were, a cenacle for Jesus, priest and victim. Such is the genealogy of the men who worked at the training of the clergy in the first half of the seventeenth century.

M. Bourdoise said: "Parishes! Parishes!" and parishes began to spring up. He set himself to the task—he was a hard man—of cleansing God's temple. A man who is not to be deterred by obsta-

on January 7, 1641. His first studies were made at the Collège d'Harcourt and then at the Sorbonne, of which he became a doctor in 1615. He entered the Oratory on June 17, 1617, was appointed superior of Saint Magloire in 1624, and second General of the Oratory, on the death of de Bérulle, in 1629.

cles needs a tongue and an arm, and M. Bourdoise had both. He began in one of the most flourishing parishes — it was a parish of the Parliament — and it had illustrious parishioners — St Nicholas du Chardonnet. He counted on its forming a centre after it was thoroughly organised. In the beginning he waged merciless war on those priests who, by reason of their want of clerical decorum, could scarcely be distinguished from laymen. He waged war every way; he said a thing today, and repeated it tomorrow; he was like a gimlet boring holes. He is, perhaps, a man who does not excite much sympathy, a man of mediocre intelligence with a mind rather strong than broad; there is something of the peasant about him, something crafty. I should not have liked to be a member of the little community he established; but I would have liked to live opposite it, for the sake of the beautiful way the divine service was carried out. He had a will that made itself felt; he was like a drop of water that wears away the stone; you can have no idea of the strength of a man upright and inflexible, who feels that he is upheld by a principle. (There is not enough of this at the present day.) He made himself respected, and no one can tell the good he effected in the dioceses of Paris, Beauvais, and Chartres.

So M. Bourdoise set to work. He called himself the “universal beadle,” and that’s exactly what he was. He began by attacking those priests who did not wear the cassock, but first of all he gave them an example in his own little community of ecclesiastics who were perfectly correct, and penetrated with the respect they owed to what they bore within them. “If we are sufficiently charitable,” he used to say, “we shall be polite enough.” For the vast majority of men, even of clerics, it is necessary to proceed from the exterior to the interior; the exterior is a great help.

One day, when M. Bourdoise was in the Abbey of St Denis, he saw a priest dressed in an alb going to confession to another priest who wore a pointed beard (like M. Olier’s when he started life), a small doublet, a short cloak, and yellow top-boots. He went to look for the Abbot. “Come along,” he said, “and see a soldier hearing a priest’s confession.” He restored the surplice to honour, and the tonsure,

which was then so thoughtlessly received, and is now so movingly conferred at St Sulpice. Tonsure is not an order, but it marks a separation from the world, and whilst the young cleric is receiving it "*Dominus pars hereditatis meae et calicis mei: tu es, qui restitues hereditatem meam mihi*" {"The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot", Ps 16:5 (15:5 Vg)} is chanted.

"If I were to ask you what is the tonsure," said M. Bourdoise, "you would reply, 'A condition requisite for receiving an ecclesiastical benefice,'" and, in matter of fact, it was almost only just that. The Archbishop of Lyons went one day to St Nicholas du Chardonnet, dressed very sumptuously, and taking along with him a little dog (the same sort of atrocious little dogs that ladies carry about today). He came to hear Mass, but there was a delay. "What are they waiting for?" the Archbishop enquired. "They are waiting for a dog to be put outside the church," said M. Bourdoise. He said to some priests. "There are artists who paint so badly that if they draw a horse, an inscription should be put under it: 'This is a horse.' So, too, when you appear in public one would like to write on your hat: 'This is an ecclesiastic.'"

He waged war on all those whom he roundly called "lazy priests." Boileau said later on: "The idle Canon learns how to do nothing." M. Bourdoise hated cobwebs; he could not bear to see them in a church, because the Lord is present in the tabernacle. One day, near Bourges, he complained to the parish priest about it. "I am nearly dead from telling them to clean the place," said the parish priest. "Oh," said M. Bourdoise, "why not say, 'Let us clean it?'" There are a great many things in life like that. "What are these ecclesiastics afraid of?" he went on. "Are they afraid of being canonised?"

On another occasion a priest came to say Mass at St Nicholas, and went away immediately afterwards. M. Bourdoise had served the Mass (he liked serving Mass, because he wanted just a little to see how Mass was said—at least, that's what people said). He lit a candle and walked beside the priest. "What are you doing?" said the latter. "I am going in procession with the Blessed Sacrament, which

is still in you." There were no two ways about him. It is incredible what he obtained by acting in this way. St Vincent de Paul gave him a few little hints on his methods. "You are all only wet hens and time-servers," was the answer he got.

M. Bourdoise did not care much for having ladies in church; he thought that these plants — not weeds, oh! certainly not! — took up too much room. "They are like Jerusalem artichokes; once sown, they spring up everywhere." He mistrusted St Francis de Sales, who was not his style; he suspected his spirit. He remarked to the saint: "You are a Bishop, and it seems to me that you are only interested in ladies." And St Francis de Sales answered that such was the grace he had received, whilst in seventeen years he had been able to train up only a cleric and a half.

It soon became the fashion to go to St Nicholas du Chardonnet. Fashion is a sad business! People at first do something quite simply, and then decay sets in; in the beginning the material is excellent, then it becomes fashionable and grows shoddy. Even spiritual direction itself, which was so sober in the beginning of the seventeenth century, developed into an abuse towards the end. So the Duchess of Aiguillon went to St Nicholas because divine service was carried out there so beautifully, and was very highly spoken of. As she thought she had the privilege, which the ladies of the time claimed, of taking her place in the choir, she had her hassock carried into it.

"Moses seemed less awe-inspiring to Pharaoh...."

M. Bourdoise drove out the Duchess's lackey. Richelieu was annoyed, and, sending for him, gave him a warm welcome. "But Your Eminence prescribed it!" "How so?" "Did you not preside over an assembly of Bishops at which the canon law forbidding women to take their places in church choirs was renewed?" Richelieu shrugged his shoulders, as if he had to deal with a man from whom nothing could be expected.

So M. Bourdoise was the indefatigable cleanser of the temple of God, beginning all over again to-day what he had done yesterday. He was, in certain cases, an invaluable man to help souls. If you ap-

proach a person very gingerly to take his measure for a suit of clothes that will fit him comfortably, you will not always find it the best tactics. There are some who need to have an iron breast-plate handed them with the remark: "You must put on that, and accustom yourself to the idea that it must be done." That was the guiding principle of his direction, and such a man is often of greater help than one who proceeds in a round-about way, especially if he has the spirit, which I come back to, of insisting on the principle in spite of everything. There is a force about the canon laws that those who despise them take more account of than is generally believed; persons who have lost their way feel, somehow, that they are weak even if they make an affectation of saying the contrary. You may apply this principle to the social order, to the moral order....

To sum up, M. Bourdoise's principle was progress from without to within. The cassock may seem only a trifle, but it is not a matter of indifference as far as externals are concerned — not the least little bit in the world.

But whatever may be our esteem for M. Bourdoise, our respectful esteem (we would willingly take off our hats to him), we prefer a nobler school, a school that gets a grip on things, not by the body, but by the spirit, the priestly school of the Oratory, founded by Fr. de Bérulle. His life, in three very interesting volumes, has been written by Fr. Houssaye,¹ a most conscientious historian, who conceals nothing — a real historian.

Fr. de Bérulle was born in 1575. Before his association with the reform that began in the early seventeenth century he had come in contact with many holy souls, such as Madame Acarie and the Carmelites, who lived by the spirit of our Lord. What is a soul? Something alive. But does it live by its own life? No; the soul lives a sort of life that is higher than the natural life; it lives by the life of

¹ The Abbé Houssaye was parish priest of the Madeleine; he published three volumes on Cardinal de Bérulle: *M. de Bérulle et les Carmelites de France*, Paris, 1872; *Le Père de Bérulle et l'Oratoire*, Paris, 1874; *Le Cardinal de Bérulle et le Cardinal de Richelieu*, Paris, 1875.

our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus lived in Mary; afterwards he lived a hidden life, a life of toil and suffering to the day of his death. He also lives in the saints, a life hidden and radiant at the same time. Fr. de Bérulle had known souls, such as Mother Magdalen of St Joseph, who devoted herself to the sorrows of Jesus Christ in the mystery of his passion, in the abandonment of his heart, even in his sufferings on the Cross. He had known Mother Margaret of the Blessed Sacrament—she was from Beaune—who spoke of the divine Childhood with such deep understanding, and he understood the language of their souls. When our Lord said, “I am the vine, and you the branches,” we do not sufficiently understand what he meant; it is this: “The life that I gave my human nature is the very same life which is now in you, which I communicate to you, by means of the Eucharist, or the Eucharist is nothing else but a means invented by me that I may live in you and you in me.” Very well then! Fr. de Bérulle had been deeply penetrated with this idea, as one must be if one is to be its apostle, and to help others understand it. He had brought it to maturity in his work of guiding souls; he had seen our Lord living in these souls, our Lord living in his saints.

Every enthusiastic soul, such as Fr. de Bérulle, attracts disciples, who are drawn by the abundance of that living water with which our Lord has replenished it and from which they can draw, for God had made such a soul a fountain-head. Fr. de Bérulle taught his doctrine to these disciples; he showed them the relations that exist between our Lord Jesus Christ and the priest, and the need for preaching by example as well as by precept. He wished priests to have learning, not as an ornament of the mind, but as an instrument of the faith. Everything should be directed to a life of union with Jesus Christ. The writings and teachings of Fr. de Bérulle are only a development of St Paul’s saying: “*Hoc sentite in vobis quod et in Christo Jesu*” {‘Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus’, Phil 2:5}. We must get a hold on and assimilate the mind that was in Jesus Christ. Men must be looked at in the way our Lord looked at them; God must be regarded as our Lord regarded him; the thoughts and feelings of our Saviour must be put on like a garment that clings close to our souls. Such was Fr. de Bérulle’s idea: to form priests solely by the

contemplation of the Word Incarnate. The Word does not wish to stand alone; he wishes to take us with him; he wills that, by the life of grace, we be made like unto him, to live the life of his spirit, to share his divine strength.

That is how Cardinal de Bérulle nourished the soul with this “food of doctrine,” to use a phrase then very much in vogue. You may find this sublime teaching in his *Life of Jesus* and *The Greatness of Jesus*. They are not very well written; his style is heavy; they are rather too lofty; you will not find many ideas in them, or anything to arouse the attention. We are on the heights, and it is hard to breathe, but there is something intimate, penetrating, and real about them. A first reading is disheartening, but to meditate on them is most interesting.

In 1624 Fr. de Bérulle gathered his disciples together at St Magloire, in the centre of a district that Bossuet considered the airiest in Paris; Fr. de Bourgoing was there, and Fr. de Condren came afterwards. This was the beginning of the Oratory.

Michelet, who mentions the Oratory, remarks, “This Italian word, Oratorio, brings music to the mind,” because sacred concerts used to be given in the Roman Oratory. But Fr. de Bérulle meant by the Oratory a place for prayer. He spent three hours every day preparing for Mass, and three hours in thanksgiving. This would scarcely do for a parish church, but his was a mystical soul.

Cardinal de Bérulle’s great devotion was to Jesus living in Mary, bestowing his graces on her; after that, he was devoted to St Mary Magdalen. His little sermons on St Mary Magdalen are wonderful. He had them read to the future Queen of England.¹ It is surprising to see such lofty teaching addressed to her, but the same sort of surprise is aroused by reading Bossuet’s sermons. It is a theology of the heights, and we are astonished, not only at the preacher, but also at the congregation. The explanation of it is that the congregation had already been trained. It had been formed at the Oratory by Fr. de

¹. Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I.

Bérulle, Fr. de Condren, and Fr. Lejeune.¹ And that is the answer to the questions one puts oneself whilst reading Bossuet's magnificent sermons. When Fr. de Condren joined the Oratory, he brought to it a mind that had already acquired the spirit of Fr. de Bérulle. He was a mystic, an interior soul, an enemy to self, dedicated to annihilation, after the manner of our Lord's annihilation on our behalf, a victim for our sakes. God is honoured by a victim which, in association with himself, makes an oblation of itself to him. Such, too, was the spirit of M. Olier and of St Sulpice.

Fr. de Condren had shown what manner of man he was even as a child. When he was about seven or eight years old he lived at Monceau, and used to go out hunting. There was a charming portrait of him painted, and people used to say on looking at it: "What a pretty child!" It made him furious. What did he do? He went and took his little bow and arrow, and set to work to bore holes in it, so as not to have to listen to being called "a pretty child." Such was Fr. de Condren as a child. His soul's resting-place was the supper-room, alone with the Holy Spirit, the memory of the Last Supper, and the annihilation of our Lord. He knew that the Church was not made for the Oratory, but the Oratory for the Church. He had no desire that the congregation should be regarded as necessary to the welfare of religion, or that it should win a great name in the world, or direct a multitude of persons. No; he desiderated a spirit of humiliation for the Congregation itself, as well as for its members. He directed a certain number of men, lavishing on them his time, his intellect, and his heart. Now a confessor is rather like a doctor: the doctor assists nature, so does the priest; it is not a priest's business to impose his own ideas, but to aid the workings of grace.

He experienced great interior desolation, and passed through a strange darkness of spirit. A man is not called on to train others that he may escape suffering himself. Often he could not prepare his

¹. Jean Lejeune was born in 1592; he entered the Oratory in 1614, and was remarkable for the holiness of his life and his missionary zeal. Twelve volumes of his sermons were published before his death, which occurred in 1672.

SOME SPIRITUAL GUIDES OF THE 17TH CENTURY

sermons, and he did not know what he was going to say when he ascended the pulpit. "I am going," he used to say, "to make an exhibition of my wretchedness; that, at least, will be good for me." He patiently endured this state. He used to say: "When Jesus is in the ship, and it is tossed about by the tempest, let it suffice for us that our Lord is present; there is no need to awake him."

I must stop here and go preach a sermon; next time we will go on to speak of M. Olier.

MONSIEUR OLIER AT ST SULPICE¹

IN the last lecture we began by talking about the early days of M. Olier. He was chosen by Divine Providence to carry out the lofty ideas of Fr. de Bérulle and Fr. de Condren in the training of young clerics, and the establishment of seminaries. We have seen what were the trials he had to undergo, and the souls he met on his way. A priest does not reach the altar steps without having had experience of many sacrifices made on his behalf, of meeting many souls who have made an offering of themselves for his sake; on the altar there are relics of the holy martyrs sealed up in a stone, to show that the sacrifice of the martyrs is one with the sacrifice offered up on this stone. Beneath the altar on which M. Olier offered up his first Mass he might have seen many relics, many sacrifices offered, many sufferings accepted, on his behalf. There was Blessed Mother Agnes of Langeac, Mademoiselle de Bucy, and many, many others.

We have seen by what interior conflicts he learned the nature of the soul when left to itself, and what our Lord does for its sake. The priest and the director must know all that, and, looking at the soul from the spiritual point of view, he must arrive at a definition of it, as a permanent need for God, a never-ending want. The soul is a something that needs unceasingly to be set in motion by him who said: "My Father worketh until now, and I work!"² That is what M. Olier's trials taught him, so that he, in his turn, might be able to teach the same lesson to the young men whom he was to train.

We said a word about the foundation of the seminary, and the little congregation at Vaugirard which had been established under Fr. de Condren's inspiration. He was its father, and it was made up of his pupils and disciples. In a short space of time it was to develop

¹. March 2, 1879.

². St John v 17.

into the Society of St Sulpice, to found and direct the first seminaries in France. The special note of this society must be sought for in Fr. de Condren's and M. Olier's spiritual direction. That note is one of great moderation, unceasing application to one sole work, and that an entirely spiritual one—the hidden life, the life of the supper-room. The Sulpician does not travel about, he does not leave the young men whom he is training; he is like a hen sitting motionless and gathering its chickens under its wing. Such work looks only to God and brings no earthly glory. It is often said: "The Sulpicians have not produced great men, theologians of the first rank." That is not true. They have not produced men who attract attention, who make themselves known by their preaching or the part they take in public affairs, but they have produced men who train others, who sacrifice themselves for the sake of others, who give others of their very best, and also men who hold a very high rank as theologians.

A professor has not the same sort of talent as an orator. His business is to teach the elements of his subject, forcibly and methodically; he should give solid instruction, and the Sulpicians have done that. Apart from such solid instruction there is spiritual training, and that is a thing which does not bring much worldly fame; explaining and teaching ascetical doctrines methodically does not bring much earthly glory. The Society of St Sulpice has had men who were very remarkable for the moderation of their minds, men who were eminently French. A certain school, on account of this French character, has called it by another name—a name intended as a reproach, a name that is a synonym for French. It has never deserved it; M. de Bretonvilliers,¹ M. de la Chatardie, M. Tronson²

^{1.} Alexandre le Ragois de Bretonvilliers took over the charge of the parish of St Sulpice when M. Olier was attacked by illness in 1652. He succeeded M. Olier as General of the Congregation, and drew up its constitutions which he had approved by Cardinal Chigi, the papal legate in Paris. He transferred the Solitude from Vaugirard to a property of his family's at Château d'Avron. He died in 1676.

^{2.} M. Tronson succeeded to de Bretonvilliers as General of the Congregation. He transferred the Sulpician seminary from Château d'Avron to Issy, where it still is. He was engaged in the disputes about Quietism that arose between Bossuet and Fénelon. He was remarkable for his sound knowledge, practical mind, and deep

certainly did not deserve it. Look at the attitude of M. Emery,¹ who is a personification of the Sulpician spirit, in the time of Napoleon! His moderation, his logic, his strength, and composure!... There is a man who is not illustrious, and yet no man rendered greater services to the Church, or averted greater dangers from it in the time of Napoleon.

I might also name some Sulpician authors such as M. Gosselin, and others.

A Sulpician's time, according to Fr. de Condren's idea, no longer belongs to himself; it is entirely at the disposal of others. At any hour of the day or night the young men he directs are free to approach him. Fr. de Condren believed that one of the greatest sacrifices a man can make is to place his time at the disposal of the business, the worry, or even the more or less legitimate whims of the first comer. After that, there is not very much else to be given, for a man has given his soul, his own taste for reflection; he has made a sacrifice of his inner self.

In a seminary not so much is done for the mind as for the spirit. Moral and dogmatic theology, Sacred Scripture are taught there methodically, simply, and scientifically, but the most important thing is spiritual training.

Another note of the Sulpician spirit, which it shares with the early Oratory, and the Vincentians, is great moderation with regard to the entire congregation itself. St Vincent notes this point in very simple

piety.

¹ Jacques André Emery (1732-1811) joined the Sulpicians in his early youth, and was ordained priest in 1758. He was elected Superior-General of the Congregation in 1782. During the Revolutionary period he was perhaps the coolest-headed member of the French clergy, and whilst willing to take and recommend others to take certain oaths tendered by the various Governments, he was staunch in his opposition to the civil constitution of the clergy. He sent Sulpician fathers to found the first American seminary at Baltimore in 1790. He was at once firm and conciliatory with Napoleon, who greatly respected him. There is an excellent account of M. Emery in *Essays*, by Fr. H. I. D. Ryder.

language that serves to make his meaning perfectly plain; on one occasion he asked the priests of the mission if they had noticed how men, gathered together in a congregation, are inclined to exalt their society. Individually there may not be a trace of egoism about them, but, at the same time, there is an inclination to pride; not personal pride, but a pride that may grow into a collective pride. "Here are Peter, James, and John," said he, "forming an association. Peter is not a genius, James is even less so, and John is certainly not one at all. Are we to call it a learned society because it contains three mediocre men?" St Vincent de Paul may be easily recognised by such a remark! The spirit of the Vincentians is marked by a great modesty, even with regard to their own community. At the present day I am not quite sure if a certain consciousness of one's own worth and a little ambition is not useful in making an impression on human society.... Alongside the Sulpicians and the Vincentians I see an important position, happily occupied by the Society of Jesus, which is certainly better known, and makes a great impression on the laity.

There was another point to which M. Olier often came back—namely, that a priest should not spend himself on worldly affairs, or busy himself about what does not concern him, or use the influence acquired by spiritual ministrations in a sphere that is not his own. Fr. de Condren, St Vincent de Paul, and M. Olier are agreed in saying: "We are the administrators of heavenly things; we should not trespass on a territory that does not belong to us." It is said that, previous to them, St Augustine had dissuaded his disciples from interfering in marriages. That is not exactly a priest's business; he is rather at sea there, he looks at men from a special standpoint. As for myself, I cannot look at people without wishing to give them absolution, and I regard them from the point of view of the possible relation they may have towards such an absolution. (I think other priests are like myself.) You may say that's a rather narrow point of view. What a priest looks for in a soul is what the soul itself is still hoping for; he is looking for that special feeling of emptiness produced by God himself in the soul, the point at which God demands something

from it. The world sees the soul's passions, interests, and ambitions, the bitter waters that are flooding over it, but we—well, we look beneath these bitter waters for the little spring of Arethusa winding on its way, for that little stream of grace, deep down, well hidden, but which is there in spite of everything. The world says: "There goes a rake." The priest looks closer; he sees certain disgusts, which for him give rise to as many hopes; he sees a sadness that reveals the greatness of the soul, and its inability to be satisfied with worldly success. Even a wife often knows very little about her husband. She is well aware of his faults, his tastes, and the habitual trend of his mind, but not of the hidden workings of his soul; she may believe that thoughts about religion are absolutely foreign to him; she may advise him to pray for faith, and she might hear the answer in her own heart: "How do you know I have not asked for what you are telling me to ask for?" In point of fact, there are hidden workings of the soul, there is a hidden source whose direction cannot be estimated, but the trace of which may be discerned throughout a whole lifetime. Now that is what a priest looks for, and searches after, in souls. That is—if you like—a profound point of view, but it is a very special one, which, I fancy, will scarcely make it clear if two persons will get on well together in married life. This shows that such matters do not come within a priest's competence, as Fr. de Condren and M. Olier often remarked.

There is another point on which they insisted—it is a profound idea. "A priest, after finishing his functions at the altar or his ministrations of the sacraments, should, in some way or other, resume his place among the laity." That is quite true. When a priest has exercised a right—which is a right because it is a duty—when he has offered up the holy sacrifice, administered the sacraments, preached the word of God, he should go and resume his place; I mean he should become like one of his hearers. Hence a priest, for instance, who preached on the Gospel of the Sower should take his place in the congregation to listen, in his own turn, to the parable, and ask himself if he be not the soul on which the seed was wasted because it fell by the wayside, or the soul hardened by routine, through frequent repetition of the same acts, so that the seed does

not sprout within it, or even the soul that has stifled the good seed underneath the thorns, the thorns of worldly preoccupations, or even if he be not all three together. If the priest has given Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, after having assisted our Lord and done the work of his Heart, he should kneel down amongst those whom he has blessed, and ask our Lord for a blessing on himself. After having heard confessions and given absolution, he should take his place, on his knees, among the laity and ask himself: *Numquid ego sum Domine?* {‘Surely not I, Lord?’ Mt 26:22}

Furthermore, a priest should enter into the generous ideas of those who are anxious for the welfare of society; he should do his part, placing himself alongside them, face to face with our Lord, closer to him, if you like, but in such a humble attitude as, in a way, to lose the sense of his own ministerial rights, and enter more deeply into the idea of his duties.

These were some of Fr. de Condren’s and M. Olier’s principles. We shall return to them. In proportion to the difficulty of the establishment of the first seminaries was the marvel of their spread. Scarcely was the seed sown when, throughout the whole of France, its sprouts began to shoot up.

Even in Paris you might have seen the Collège des Bons Enfants turning into a seminary under the influence of St Vincent de Paul, who had the subject greatly at heart. (The Daughters of Charity are only an appendix to the works of St Vincent de Paul.) There was also the Collège Saint-Magloire, and the seminary of St Nicholas du Chardonnet, founded by M. Bourdoise. In Lyons, in the Vivarais, in all directions the work began to spread, and helped to give France a worthy pastoral clergy. Bourdaloue,¹ it is true, in his sermons speak of the faults of the pastoral clergy, and the conclusion has been drawn that during the seventeenth century they were much inferior

¹. Louis Bourdaloue (1632–1704), one of the greatest of French preachers, joined the Jesuits when he was fifteen years old. He began to make his name as a preacher in 1665, and was called to Paris in 1669, where he remained until his death. His sermons are published in twelve volumes.

to the regular clergy. That is true in certain matters of detail, but, in most respects, the charge is unjust. Bourdaloue had in mind some of his hearers, some Court prelates, who paid very little heed to their dioceses or the spiritual needs of their abbeys, and he hit out mercilessly. "Every man for himself!" said Madame de Sévigné.¹

Besides the seminary God provided another field of action for M. Olier; this was a parish where his young clerics might be trained and drilled, and thus provided with a knowledge of the nature of the ground they would be called to work on. Providence made him parish priest of St Sulpice. We have already said that a priest must first go up to God, and then come down. Our Lord makes an oblation of himself at the offertory, immolates himself at the consecration, and then gives himself, whole and entire, at the communion. First, all for God, and then all for men; these are correlatives for a priest. You will not have charity for your neighbour except you have a little of the love of God, and, at the same time, the practice of charity, inspired by the love of God, will strengthen that love. The oblation of himself to God, and the gift of himself to his fellow-men, was now about to be demanded of M. Olier in the parish of St Sulpice.

In those days it was a suburban parish. If today we were asked which is the most devout parish in Paris, at once a picture of St Sulpice and its neighbourhood rises before us — the Rue de Sèvres, the Rue du Vieux Colombier, with its shops for the sale of pious objects, the Rue Cassette; it is above all others the pious quarter. Very well then; now, in M. Olier's day it was like Clignancourt or Fosseaux-Lions. Two years before M. Olier's arrival, St Vincent de Paul sent his missionaries there with great reluctance; he would have preferred to see them setting out for Barbary. The Faubourg Saint-Germain was under the jurisdiction, the very feeble jurisdiction at that (priests are not firm enough in dealing with temporal matters),

¹ Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, Marquise de Sévigné (1626–1696), was the daughter of St Jane Chantal's son, Celse-Benigne de Rabutin, Baron de Chantal. Professor Saintsbury says she is "the most charming of all letter-writers in all languages."

of the Abbot of Saint-Germain—a natural son of Henry IV—who let things slip so that the parish was one of the most neglected in Paris.

St Sulpice was a huge parish, stretching from St André des Arts to Grenelle, and from there to the Quays. M. Olier divided it up into several districts. But, at the same time, people looked down on it as a suburban parish. Madame Olier was deeply grieved at hearing of her son's appointment to it; the Duchesse d'Aiguillon¹ had to point out to her that it was a beautiful parish affording great scope for her son's zeal. When the Duchess finished, Madame Olier was content; there are some persons who value things only according to other people's ideas of them. Persons actuated by vanity are all just like that.

There were plenty of poor people, plenty of rogues and vagabonds in the parish of St Sulpice, Bohemians of one kind or another, and the fair of St Germain was held there. Scarcely any noble families lived in it. If you know old Paris you can follow the movements of the rich and the aristocratic. Up to the sixteenth century the Royal Family resided at the Hôtel Saint-Paul, near the Arsenal. In those days the aristocratic quarter comprised the Rue Saint-Antoine, the Rue de Petit Muse, the Rue de la Cerisaye; in Louis XIII's time the Place Royale and the church of the Minims were fashionable. The King's residence at the Louvre made Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois a fashionable church, as did the mansions built around it, such as the Hôtel de Longueville, etc.

On the other bank of the Seine, St Sulpice had its own illustrious parishioners. For instance, Gaston d'Orleans,² at the Luxembourg; he

¹ Marie de Vignerod, Marquise de Combalet, Duchesse d'Aiguillon (1604–1675), niece of Cardinal Richelieu, was married to the Sieur de Combalet in 1620. On the death of her husband she attempted to become a Carmelite nun, but her efforts were frustrated by her uncle. She was one of St Vincent de Paul's greatest helpers and was most attached to him, liberally assisting him in all his charitable undertakings.

² Jean Baptiste, third son of Henry IV (1608–1660), was created Duke of Orleans by his brother Louis XIII. His life was passed in ceaseless intrigues from the time of Richelieu and Marie de Medici to that of Mazarin and Anne of Austria. He was appointed Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom on the death of Louis XIII,

was not a pleasant sort of parishioner — however, in the end he was converted. Who would not be converted then? Rue Monsieur-le-Prince, Rue de Condé, which opens out on to the Odéon, let you see that the Hôtel de Condé was there; it was inhabited by the father of the “great Condé,”¹ and afterwards by the great man himself; he was, at this time, the Due d’Enghien. In the Rue de Seine was the Hôtel de Liancourt, where the Duchesse de Liancourt,² a woman of great worth, very witty, and a bit of a Jansenist, held her court. The Princess Palatine lived near the Church of St Sulpice, hence the name of the Rue Palatine. On the Quays, where the Hôtel de la Monnaie now stands, was the Hôtel de Nevers, the residence of the Duplessis-Guénégault. The company there, too, was also slightly Jansenist, and Madame de Guéménée³ ruled over it. She had become pious, and she made devotion fashionable (as she had done so many other things); the devil did not lose much by that.

When M. Olier accepted the parish of St Sulpice he took over a heavy burden; heavy on account of the wealthy and powerful, who were either Jansenists or unbelievers, and heavy on account of the

but finding that Mazarin had no intention of letting him use his power, he joined the Fronde.

¹. “The great Condé,” Louis de Bourbon, Prince de Condé, was born in Paris on September 8, 1621. He married Marie Clemence de Brize, a niece of Richelieu’s, in 1640. He became a soldier at a very early age, and his first great victory was against the Spaniards at the battle of Rocroy (May 19, 1643). With Turenne he gained many battles in the wars against Spain, Germany, and Holland. He also joined in the Fronde against Mazarin. In his old age he was a patron of letters, gathering around him men like Bossuet, Racine, Boileau, and La Bruyère. He died on December 11, 1686.

². Jeanne de Schomberg, Duchess of Liancourt. It was mainly through her influence and help that M. Bourdoise was able to found his congregation of the priests of St Nicholas du Chardonnet. She also assisted St Vincent and the Blessed Louise de Marillac in their works of charity. St Vincent made unavailing attempts to detach herself and her husband from the Jansenist party.

³. Marie de Rohan-Guéménée married Charles, first Duke of Luynes (1578–1621), and on his death married Claude of Lorraine, Duke of Chevreuse, in 1655. She has been already referred to in the lecture on St Francis de Sales as the “first Princess Palatine.”

poor, who indulged in all sorts of misconduct. It is always hard to get a hold of extremes, and the priest is often only able to get a hold on the middle.

There is an inclination to be too deferential to the great. M. Bourdoise, from time to time, did not lose the chance of ironically complementing some overcomplacent and submissive priest, at being Count So-and-So's or Lady So-and-So's man. It is a difficult position. The great make all sorts of demands. For example, when the Prince de Condé went to St Sulpice, he would not tolerate the slow chanting of the seminarists; he wanted to chant and make other people chant according to his own beat. A dreadful cacophony was the result. That's the sort of ideas the powerful have.

It is also a very difficult matter to manage those who are not powerful. In this difficult position, M. Olier had recourse to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. There was no devotion he had more at heart. Our Lord is the Priest who makes the oblation, he is also the victim perpetually offered up in a sacrifice that never ends. The priest gets the spirit of his vocation in the Blessed Sacrament, in which our Lord offers himself to God, and gives himself to man; the Eucharist is the bond uniting the priest and his parishioners. Our Lord comes to both shepherd and sheep; he is the same Lord for the priest and the faithful, establishing the most intimate and profound union between them. This was M. Olier's idea, among many other ones. He took the most assiduous care in his explanation of the holy Sacrifice. He wrote a wonderfully beautiful little book on the subject; he wrote it, as he had written the *Introduction to a Christian Life*, a deeply spiritual work, for the men's confraternity in his parish; you might think it was intended for contemplative monks. M. Olier was not afraid of what souls could attain to. When we see how our Lord loves them, how he acts in them, we have a feeling that there is something at the back of what we say, and we realise that the way to win souls is not by minimising doctrine, but, on the contrary, by setting it out in all its force, for we thus set it out in all its beauty. Beauty is one of the proofs of Truth. The more beautiful anything seems to us, the truer it appears. M. Olier would not have tolerated

the way some pious ladies hear Mass, for, instead of assisting at it as a sacrifice, they remain preoccupied with themselves and their failings, thinking about the communion they are to receive towards the end of Mass. That was not his idea. He invites us to unite ourselves with our Lord, immolating himself at the consecration, and giving himself to us at Holy Communion; he tells us to enter into the meaning of the sacrifice, and see Jesus Christ on the altar as he was on Calvary. If we thus participate in the dispositions of his sacrifice, we shall be ready for Holy Communion.

In this way M. Olier knew how to make people understand and love adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Benedictions were multiplied. The Jansenists protested loudly. One day when he was preaching in the pulpit an old woman reproached him for introducing novelties. He let her have her say, and then quietly remarked: "I shall look into the matter, my good soul."

He was helped by several laymen. First of all, there was the Baron de Renty,¹ who was converted by reading the *Imitation of Christ*, which was given him one day by his bookseller; it was an answer to the secret aspirations of his heart, an answer so fruitful and efficacious that the Baron devoted his whole life to our Lord. The Marquis de Fénelon,² uncle of the Archbishop, Marshal Fabert,³ Marshal de Rantzau were also solidly helpful to M. Olier in his ministry. The priest cannot succeed in his work for souls without laymen. At the present day we have to fall back somewhat on women, but, in those days, there were many men, and congregations

¹. Baron de Renty (1612–1649). His life was written by Fr. Saint-Jure, S.J., in 1651.

². Antoine de Salignac, Marquis de la Mothe-Fénelon, was born in 1621. On M. Olier's advice he gave up the army and took to works of piety. He died on October 8, 1683, fully deserving the praises bestowed on him by his great-nephew, the Archbishop of Cambrai.

³. Abraham de Fabert, one of the most illustrious Generals of the seventeenth century, was born at Metz in 1599. He was as remarkable for his civic virtues as for his military and administrative talents. He was made Governor of Sedan in 1642 and Marshal of France in 1658. He died at Sedan on May 17, 1662.

of men, to be seen at work. You can have no idea of the influence a layman may have over others. Think of one of those men who were nicknamed “the Pious” at Louis XIV’s Court. Courage was needed to show one’s colours, and take one’s stand as a devout man. Roland the Paladian would have very much preferred to be called “Roland the Hothead” than “Roland the Devout.” But consider the influence, the power exerted at Court by men like Marshal de Belléfond,¹ Marshal Fabert, the Marquis de Fénelon. Consider the influence of such men on such a woman as Mademoiselle de la Vallière.² Purity of heart and sensitiveness for divine things give a man great power. A young man has no idea of the influence he may exercise over others by giving them an example of purity combined with strength and daring courage.

Men had strongly marked characters in those days. There were furious duellists moving in society who were aptly called the “Clearers,” who went about dealing sword-thrusts that cleared the ranks of the nobility, many of whom perished in these duels. Such a man was the Count de Rougemont, who was won over to God by St Vincent de Paul when he was staying at Chatillon les Dombes. He joined the ranks of the gentlemen whom M. Olier had gathered around him, and made his prayer like many more of them. (What M. Olier succeeded in effecting is marvellous. For instance, he managed to get his parishioners to pass an examination in religious knowledge before getting married, so that he might know whether they were able to instruct their wives and children.) Very well, then; now the Count de Rougemont gave a description of how he made his prayer, and this is St Vincent de Paul’s account of it:

“One day, when I went to pay him a visit at his house, he told me about his devotional exercises, and, amongst others, of his

^{1.} Bernardin Gigault, Marquis de Belléfond, was entrusted with the army designed by Louis XIV for the invasion of England in 1692.

^{2.} Louise de la Vallière (1644–1710) was a favourite of Louis XIV’s. On her conversion she entered the Carmelite convent in the Rue d’Enfer. Bossuet preached when she made her final vows as a Carmelite nun in 1675.

detachment from creatures. ‘I am quite certain,’ said he to me (what a delightful incident!), ‘that if I am not attached to anything in this world I shall go straight to God, and hence I consider if my friendship for such and such a relative is a hindrance, or if it be self-love that hinders my progress, or if it is my vanity, or the ties of friendship that bind me, or my passions and love of comfort that keep me back, and when I see anything that turns me away from my God, I smash it ... and these are my exercises.’

“He mentioned this fact, in particular, that, one day, when he was travelling, and thinking about God as he went along the road, he examined himself as to whether he remembered any attachment; he went over the great and little attachments of the human heart. At last his eyes fell on his sword. ‘Why do you carry it? What! give up my beloved sword that helped me many and many a time, my sword which, after God, has brought me out of so many dangers! But, on the other hand, an occasion may arise when you will not have the strength to resist making use of it.... What are you now going to do with this instrument of your sin and shame?... Can you still carry it?’

And with that he gets down from his horse and smashes it against a stone.... He told me that this deed gave him such great liberty of spirit that, although it went to his heart to break the sword which he loved, yet never, from that moment, had he any further affection for things that perish, and he was attached only to God.”

We might have met another convert in the parish of St Sulpice, M. de Quériolet. He had been a violent and passionate youth, doing evil for the sake of evil, one of those mad souls who dream over and imagine mysteries of evil, after they have exhausted blasphemies and sacrileges; he was thinking of going to Constantinople and becoming a Turk, so as to fight against the Christians, but he was converted at Loudun whilst the possessed nuns were being exorcised. He became a prodigy of penance. In those days after men had given themselves up entirely to evil, they threw themselves entirely into doing good, grace acting on them just like the discharge of the loaded cannon the Jansenists spoke of (efficacious grace was the cannon-ball; and the cannon charged with powder, their famous sufficient grace). In those

days the cannon-ball made a breach, but, in our own times, with the new fortifications, the cannon-ball only buries itself in the ground, and lies there.... Indifference is what I most dread.

The seventeenth century was not indifferent. We can feel that when we read its ascetical books. We mentioned M. Olier's *Introduction to a Christian Life*, which you might think had been written for religious. Going along the Rue Pot-de-Fer, now the Rue Bonaparte, I would have taken off my hat out of respect for the Jesuit novitiate. Fr. Hayneuve¹ lived there, with his eyes raised to heaven—you could only see the whites of them—and Fr. Saint-Jure,² and Fr. Guilloret.³

Why are their ascetical works not relished today? Because a little silence must be made in one's heart in order to understand their teaching. It cannot be taken in immediately. Today we pass, without any transition, from a life of overwork to the perusal of a page of ascetical literature, and the impression rapidly wears off. Furthermore, what do we expect from a spiritual writer? We ask for an arrow that goes straight to the heart. We do not give enough time to spiritual reading; we want a flash of lightning, and not a fire that quietly kindles in order to warm slowly, but surely.

The Sulpicians were certainly severe directors; no matter what M. Hamel, who was parish priest at St Mery, may have said; he wanted to introduce public penance into his parish. He accused M. Olier of laxity, but, on the contrary, M. Olier was a very severe director; if anything were to be brought against him, from the point of view of

^{1.} Julian Hayneuve, S.J., was a distinguished theologian and spiritual writer. His best-known work is *L'ordre de la vie et des mœurs qui conduit l'homme à son salut et le rend parfait en son état*, published in 1639. It is the work of a true Christian humanist.

^{2.} Jean Baptiste Saint-Jure (1588–1657), born at Metz, entered the Society of Jesus in 1604. He passed some time at the Court of Henrietta Maria in England. His chief works are *De la connaissance et de l'amour du Fils de Dieu* (1634), *Méditations* (1642), *L'homme spirituel* (1646), and a life of his friend the Baron de Renty (1651).

^{3.} Fr. Guilloret was one of the most remarkable spiritual guides of the seventeenth century in France; he died in 1684.

his canonisation, it might be the rather too rigid severity of his teaching.

Moreover, all direction was severe in those days. The Vincentians were severe, and so were the Jesuits in the Rue Pot-de-Fer. You have only to consider St Vincent de Paul's penitents, women like Madame de Gondi. They were souls whose personality disappeared behind the charitable deeds they performed. They were like leafless trees; only the fruit was left, even the wood had disappeared. The same is true of those who were guided by M. Olier. Consider Mademoiselle Laschassier, and many others, how severely they were handled! La Bruyère could not have put their names down in his malicious list. "What sort is the lady who has a director? Is she kinder to her husband and gentler to her servants? Is she one with a less execrable temper, and a lesser relish for the comforts of life? No, not a bit of it. What, then, is she? Just a lady who has a director!"

We are far removed also from Boileau's¹ dreadful portrait of a director, which I can never read without beating my breast and asking myself: *Numquid ego sum?* {'Surely not I?' Mt 26:22}

"How well fed he looks! What a complexion! How rosy pink! Spring's flowers are blooming in his face. And yet to listen to him you would think he is barely alive. He had a headache, and was feverish yesterday, and, if he had not been promptly succoured, he would be in bed, perhaps about to flicker out. But, thanks to devout souls, there is no mortal man so well looked after as a ladies' director.... Highly prized ratafia, exquisite syrups, all sorts of preserves descend on him; for devout stomachs were always hungry for sweetmeats, whether candied, liquid, or solid; I believe the first marzipan was made for them, and the first Rouen sugar-plum."

There is nothing less like a portrait such as that than a Sulpician or a Vincentian, not even Abelly,² who wrote a *Medulla Theologica*

^{1.} Nicolas Boileau-Despreaux (1636–1711), poet, critic, and satirist. His most remarkable works were *Le Lutrin* and *L'Art Poétique*, on which Pope based his *Essay on Criticism*.

^{2.} Louis Abelly, Bishop of Rodez (1604–1691); besides the *Medulla Theologica*

{‘The Marrow of Theology’}.

An edifying collection of the deaths of M. Olier’s parishioners might be made—Gaston d’Orléans, the Prince de Condé. They all ended well. You remember the death of Louis XIII in 1643. The poor King had been an “unconscionable time a-dying”; he was forty-two years of age. He lay ill at Saint-Germain, and had himself carried from the old castle to the new, where, as he felt his end approaching, he wished to have his eldest son baptised, and called Louis, the gift of God. After the child had been baptised he had him brought into his presence, and asked him: “What is your name?” The little Prince replied: “I am Louis XIV.” (St Louis would have answered: “Louis de Poissy.”) The little Prince said: “My name is Louis XIV.” “Not just yet,” said Louis XIII, with a sad smile. The King hovered between life and death for several days, looking at the spire of St Denis and thinking of his last resting-place; he loved the landscape that lay stretched out before him. He spoke to his confessor, Fr. Denet, and to St Vincent de Paul about the worries that oppressed his conscience. He was troubled by two incidents. The first was his mother’s death; she had died in wretchedness at Cologne, deprived of all help, almost in a state of destitution. The war, too, was a cause of remorse. “Even if it were just, might it not have been stopped?”... And yet, in spite of all that, he had another fit of war fever; the Due d’Enghien was advancing through Picardy, the Spaniards were about to besiege Rocroi; the King had a last gleam of happiness when he heard that they were flying before the Due d’Enghien.... On May 14 he expired in the arms of St Vincent de Paul, in sentiments of the greatest piety, and with the Psalms on his lips. That was how Louis XIII and many another nobleman died. Whilst the Chevalier d’Evreux was on trial he received a letter in prison from a woman who must have blushed as she wrote it, because she had been his companion in sin ... it was a request to him to die well. These are incidents, most moving incidents, that help us to see the sort of world on which M. Olier

(which earned for him the epithet *mellow* from Boileau) he wrote the standard life of St Vincent de Paul, published in 1664.

lavished his soul, and expended his zeal.

The greatest fight he had to wage was, as we have already said, against duelling, and one of the glories of his ministry, as parish priest of St Sulpice, was the society he established to put down duelling.¹ The “Clearers” went on growing in numbers. In the parish of St Sulpice, in the course of a single week, seventeen men were killed in duels. I need not remind you of the Place Royale and its contests between four, eight, and sixteen duellists, with its great windows opening out on the square, and ladies looking on at this butchery. A gentleman declining to act as second to a friend was despised; Richelieu could do nothing. This society was comprised of men remarkable for their military exploits. They promised under oath, and in writing, that they would never either fight, or act as seconds, in a duel; Marshal Fabert, and the Marquis de Fénelon, who had been noted duellists, were placed at the head of the association.

M. Olier made use of the only efficacious remedy in the circumstances. He brought together men like Marshal Fabert, the Marquis de Fénelon, whose bravery could not be questioned, and induced them to make a resolution never to accept a challenge to a duel, and by their word and example to break down the prejudices in favour of duelling. One day the Marquis de Fénelon was at Court; he was insulted and struck; he kept his promise, and the Prince de Condé, amazed at such Christian courage, said to him: “Sir, a man must be as sure as I am of your courage and not be amazed at seeing you resume friendly relations.” There was no man less a Christian, just at that time, than the Prince de Condé—he had a face like a bird of prey!—it was only later on that he received what Bossuet calls “the inestimable gift of piety.” The *Cid*² had just been produced, and it gave a fresh impetus to duelling, much to Richelieu’s anger. “Die

^{1.} The society was composed of gentlemen famous for their military exploits. They bound themselves by oath in writing never to fight, or act as seconds in, a duel. Marshal de Fabert and the Marquis de Fénelon, who had been famous duellists, were at the head of the association (R.).

^{2.} The *Cid* was produced in 1636. It was the work of Pierre Corneille (1606–1684), one of the greatest dramatic French poets.

or slay!” was a phrase that was well remembered.

M. Olier preached incessantly against this craze. He described the duel as the noble-minded Benedict XIV,¹ later on, described it in the Bull *Detestabilem*. A duel is contrary to the natural law; it is akin to suicide. It is contrary to charity, inasmuch as it is an offence against our neighbour, whom we seek to kill. It is injurious to the State, which it deprives of citizens. And, above all, it is an offence against God, the Lord of life and death. Some theologians had maintained that duelling under certain circumstances was lawful; for instance, if a man would be looked on as a coward for refusing to fight, or if a refusal to fight would entail beggary. Several propositions had been brought forward, and these were condemned by Alexander VII. This is one of them: “That man is a coward who does not avenge an insult; and the duel is a means of avenging it.” (That is the condemned proposition.)

The Bull points out that the man who goes against his conscience and the law of God is a coward, but that it is not cowardice to abandon false and worldly ideas. Moreover, there is nothing to show that the man who has committed the crime will be punished; the issue depends on chance, skill, and circumstances that may militate against the man who is in the right. The way to clear one’s honour is by an appeal to reason, to justice, and an upright honourable life that enforces esteem.

M. Olier’s association attained its end, and this is an example for you of the good that can be brought out by a priest and laymen united together.

Sometimes the laity are more eager than the priest. The priest has to be on his guard against an inclination to do good in a hurry; he knows souls, and he knows what they can endure. It is for him to set the pace. But he must not hold himself aloof from the faithful. The

¹ Benedict XIV (Prosper Lambertini) “perhaps the most learned of the Popes” (1675–1758), was chiefly remarkable as a canonist and for his treatise on the béatification and canonisation of saints.

shepherd and the sheep make one in our Lord who willed to live in each of his flock and to communicate, not merely his doctrines, but his life both to the shepherd and the sheep.

MONSIEUR OLIER AND THE SEMINARIES¹

I THANK the younger members of my audience. There is a large number of them here — very many more than I had expected to see. I thank them for coming with all my heart; they thoroughly deserve thanks for coming on Quadragesima Sunday to hear me talk about M. Bourdoise and M. Olier.

In my last lesson I began to tell you of the great predominant idea of the seventeenth century — the idea of the priest. The formation of the clergy was the dream of all those who held fast to the Church. There was the feeling of a great need, a great want, and we mentioned some of the men specially concerned in effecting this reform.

There had been a whole series of efforts made for the reformation of the religious orders, and the history of these efforts would be very interesting. Take, for example, the Canons of St Augustine, who were reformed by Blessed Peter Fourier² in Lorraine, and the Canons of St Geneviève, and so many other reformed Canons throughout the length and breadth of France. (I am referring here to Canons Regular, who live according to rule, and are consequently true religious, such as the Premonstratensians.) Each of these attempts had its own importance; the good that may be done by a priest animated by the Spirit of God can never be fully appreciated, still less can the good done by a society of priests. But just now we are not considering the question from that point of view; we have only looked at the efforts that were being made for the training of the pastoral clergy.

¹. February 23, 1879.

². St Peter Fourier was born in 1565. He joined the Canons Regular and was ordained in 1589. He established the Congregation of Notre Dame to teach poor girls gratuitously. In 1629 he effected the reformation of the Canons Regular. He was beatified in 1730 by Benedict XIII and canonised in 1897 by Leo XIII.

There was a man of very energetic will at the head of the movement, one of those men with whom it is not well to fall out — M. Bourdoise. We said that he was a little like a pioneer hewing his way forward with an axe, courageously wielding his arm, and allowing nothing to stand in his way. He did a great deal of good as regards the decorum of the pastoral clergy, which had left so much to be desired; he induced them to wear the cassock, which the clergy were ashamed of; people pointed with their fingers, and even threw stones at it. You may say to me: “That’s a trifle!” No; it is not a trifle. The habit does not make the monk, but it helps to make him; it is a small matter that helps to bring about something much more important.... You may say: “Why should a priest wear a different dress from a layman?” There are people who abuse the cassock, just as Bernardin de St-Pierre abused church bells. People don’t like to hear church bells when they have forgotten them. They toll like a funeral knell, recalling one’s first communion, and the days when one used to go to church.... The cassock does the same; there may be ignorance in the hatred it meets with, but there is also a violent desire to escape from a reproach. People think they have forgotten; they wish “by many, many efforts to escape from all remorse,” as Mathan said. And that’s what it means.

You may also note the influence of the cassock on the priest himself: it is a protection. Everybody needs, at times, to be protected, not against others, but above all against himself. We are our own worst enemies. The cassock is a warning, a reminder, a help. I need not urge the point; you understand what I mean. Those who abuse the cassock know quite well what they want us to lose along with it. M. Bourdoise was quite right in attaching such great importance to externals, but he may, perhaps, have accentuated too much the difference between a priest and a layman; perhaps he isolated the priest too much, making the clergy a world apart. People would think so nowadays, and they would be right.

We spoke of the Oratory and the spirit in which Fr. de Bérulle trained priests in the school wherein the Apostles had been trained. “*Venite, videte.*” {‘Come, and see’; John 1:39} The Apostles saw our

Lord, they were penetrated with his teaching, and when the Holy Ghost had formed Jesus Christ in them—that is to say, when he had established in them analogous dispositions to those of Jesus Christ—they continued his work. Our Lord had preached; they preached. Our Lord went about doing good. He had healed and brought back to life; priests, through the sacraments, continue to heal and restore souls to life. Our Lord had perpetuated his presence in the Blessed Sacrament; the priests' hands are called on to do what had been done by the blessed hands of our Saviour, and not only their hands, but their hearts also, are to strive to conform themselves to the image of the heart of our Lord.

That is the guiding idea of all clerical training; Fr. de Bérulle never ceased bringing back souls to this idea, and he did so with much loftiness of view, and a penetrating eloquence, the eloquence of the supper-room. He spoke to a small select circle capable of imbibing this teaching to the full, and he always spoke to them of the Incarnate Word.

Fr. de Condren carried on the work. Madame de Chantal, comparing him with St Francis, said: "My own blessed father was born to instruct men, and Fr. de Condren to teach angels." She did not regard this as a mark of superiority in Fr. de Condren; she just pointed out that he had received a special mission in regard to "The Angels of God"—priests, the ambassadors of Christ. From childhood his aim and effort had been to conform his own soul to that of our Saviour's. From childhood he had seen Jesus Christ, not merely as a priest who makes an oblation, but also as a soul making an offering of itself, giving thanks, making reparation for mankind, a victim as well as a priest, from the very fact of his Incarnation. When God said to the Incarnate Word, "Thou art my Son," by that very fact he said to him: "Thou art a priest according to the order of Melchisedech, thou art invested with the functions of a priest." The priest, moreover, is bound to offer up an internal sacrifice, the sacrifice of himself; he must make an offering of his whole soul, he must be a victim by the complete mortification of his passions, he must offer up himself when he offers up the Son of God, and that should be his

whole life, and his never-ending work.

Fr. de Condren realised this conception in himself. He was a great theologian, but a mystical theologian who referred everything to the soul; he was a great director, but only for a small number to whom God spoke in a special way; he was the man for those whom God called to the ecclesiastical state. He was devoted to the hidden life of our Lord, a life that was both hidden and active, for our Lord, before offering up the external sacrifice of Calvary, was already a priest and victim, and had already undertaken to make reparation for the souls of men, to offer adoration and thanksgiving on their behalf; from the very beginning of his life he was a victim, on account of his sufferings. Now, it was in conformity with this model that Fr. de Condren sought to form those who had been confided to his care in the little cenacle where he lived. His heart resembled a tabernacle, and he made an unceasing offering of his heart to God. He felt that, whilst he was a priest, he was also a victim, a victim to be slain, but ever returning to life, a victim believed to be dead, yet ever rising from the dead—I mean his human passions, his egoism, and the pride which, to borrow a seventeenth-century phrase, approaches the altar to pluck away from it what has been offered to God were the victim.

Such was the lofty idea of reform as understood by these men. They took it from the very idea of the priesthood. Their glory lies, not so much in having founded the Oratory as a congregation, as in having, above everything else, conceived the idea that inspired it, and that idea was to supply Bishops with priests. If you consider this society closely, you will observe that it is not a religious order, with very definite rules laid down to keep it in being, with clearly marked relations existing between superiors and subjects, such as you have, for example, in the case of the Jesuits. No, it was a group of men destined to be good priests, and to form other good priests around them. This primitive idea was departed from at a very early date. The Oratory took up the work of the Jesuits and the University, and a little bit in competition with them, of establishing colleges. It was a dissipation of their strength, and a departure from the idea of their

foundation.

But the Oratory was chiefly turned aside from its path by a man who exerted an unhappy influence on it—the Abbé Saint- Cyran.¹ He was to be met with in the company of M. Bourdoise, Fr. de Bérulle, and Fr. de Condren, and even in that of St Vincent de Paul. He spoke to each of them on the subject that each had most at heart. To M. Bourdoise, on the unhappy state of the Church, the disorders and ignorance of the clergy. M. Bourdoise formed a high opinion of a man who spoke so energetically, and became friendly with him, until the day came when he showed himself in his true light. Saint- Cyran spoke to Fr. de Bérulle about those doctrines that minimise the efficacy of grace, and, as he said, attach too much importance to human liberty; he talked about ecclesiastical studies, and about St Augustine, who was most highly esteemed by both Fr. de Bérulle and Fr. de Condren. St Augustine was the Father of the seventeenth century; it saw nothing apart from him. St Cyran even insinuated himself into the companionship of St Vincent de Paul.

After having chatted with him at some length on the Fathers and Church reform, when St Vincent heard him go on to speak of the Council of Trent and how it had wavered in Catholic doctrine and broken with ecclesiastical tradition, he scented the heretic, the man who lives within himself, who gives pride of place to his own ideas, and he told Saint-Cyran so. Fr. de Condren, too, was undeceived, and towards the end of his life he wrote against Saint-Cyran, and so did M. Bourdoise. However, from his association with these men, Saint- Cyran received and held some great and noble ideas on the priesthood, which he expressed perfectly in a style lofty and almost sublime. In this or that history of Port Royal a great deal is made of this

¹ Duvergier de Hauranne, Abbé de Saint-Cyran, was born at Bayonne in 1581, studied at Louvain, and became a friend of Jansen's in 1601. Both of them went in 1611 to Candéprat, near Bayonne, and remained there until Jansen's return to Louvain in 1614. He was made Abbé of Saint-Cyran in 1620, and on going to Paris he began to exercise great influence on Port Royal from 1633 onwards. He was imprisoned at Vincennes in 1638 by Richelieu's orders, set free after the Cardinal's death, and died in 1643.

fact, but there need be no hesitation in saying that some of these ideas were borrowed from Fr. de Bérulle and Fr. de Condren. What is good, what is very good, in him was due to his association with these men. Saint-Cyran himself regarded the priest primarily as a preacher. The preacher, he thought, was everything, and in this he approximates to Calvinism. Such is not the case; preaching is nothing if the priest has not managed to make our Lord's dispositions pass into his own soul. If preaching be not lived, the preacher is no more than a tinkling cymbal, *cymbalum tinniens*. {1 Cor 13:1}

The Oratory produced several men who were illustrious in many ways, from Fr. de Bérulle to Massillon,¹ Thomassin,² Fr. Le Jeune, Fr. Senault,³ and a number of historians. One of the merits of the Oratory was to restore history to an honoured place in its colleges. History was a branch of learning rather looked down on in the seventeenth century; when they wished to say a man was ignorant of metaphysics they called him an "historian." Moreover, it was a branch of learning that was rather falsified. They liked to show historical characters in full-bottomed wigs and Court dress; they left out anything that did not seem to fit in with the suppositious majesty of this or that personage or event. It was one of the merits of the Oratory to revive an interest in history. It was also occupied with philosophy. Fr. Mersenne⁴ spoke there on the great problem of

^{1.} Jean Baptiste Massillon was born in 1663 and joined the Oratory in 1681. From 1700 onwards his fame as a preacher began to spread, and he preached Lent and Advent courses of sermons before Louis XIV at Versailles. Appointed Bishop of Clermont in 1719, he effected untold good in his diocese. He died in 1742.

^{2.} Louis Thomassin (1619–1695) joined the Oratory in 1622 {sic., 1632}, and after holding several positions of trust, became superior of the seminary of Saint-Magloire, which he held until his death. He was regarded as one of the most learned men of his time. His most famous work is a treatise on the Incarnation.

^{3.} François Senault was chiefly remarkable as a preacher. He became General of the Oratory in 1662, and held that office until 1672.

^{4.} Marin Mersenne was born in 1588; he was not an Oratorian, but a member of the order of Minims. He studied at the Jesuit college of La Flèche, where his life's friendship with Descartes began. He devoted himself to experimental science, and was a friend of Gassendi and Galileo. He died in 1648.

human liberty, the great preoccupation of Descartes.¹ In a word, the Oratory was a centre.

But the Oratory, as an order, did not play a brilliant part; it fell into Jansenism. It was noble in its origin, and great by reason of the primal idea from which it sprang. This is Bossuet's picture of it, in his funeral sermon on Fr. Bourgoing:

"At this time Pierre de Bérulle, a very remarkable and worthy man, whose dignity, I venture to say, was in no wise enhanced, even by the Roman purple, to such a height was he raised by the merits of his virtue and knowledge, began to illumine the Church of France with the purest and most sublime conceptions on the Christian priesthood and the ecclesiastical life. His immense love for the Church inspired him with the design of establishing a society to which he wished to give no other spirit than that of the Church herself, no other rules than her canons, no other superiors than her Bishops, no other bonds than those of charity, no other solemn vows than those of baptism and the priesthood. Within it holy liberty became a solemn pledge; there was obedience without dependence, and government without command.... (In that case, Richelieu might have said, it would be a society rather hard to govern. He would not have understood government without commands; he thought the Jesuits were too well governed, and feared the power they possessed in the state, from the unity and strength of their government.)

"Meekness was the sole authority, and respect was fostered without the help of fear. Charity that drives out fear performs so great a miracle; and, without any other yoke, knows how, not only to make captive, but even to destroy self-will. To form true priests the Oratory leads them to the fountain-head of truth; the holy books are ever in their hands, that by study they may unceasingly seek the

¹. René Descartes, philosopher and scientist, was born in 1596. He met Cardinal de Bérulle at Paris in 1625, and under his auspices proposed his new form of apologetics. The *Discours sur la Méthode* was published in 1637. Descartes retired to Holland in 1629 for the sake of peace and tranquillity. At the invitation of Queen Christina of Sweden he went to Stockholm, where he died in 1650.

meaning of its letter, its spirit by prayer, its depth by solitude, its power by practice, its end by charity, in which everything terminates, and which is the Christian's only treasure....

“Priests, you who are the angels of the Lord of Hosts, should ever ascend and descend like the angels whom Jacob beheld on the mystical ladder. You mount from earth to heaven to unite your souls with God by means of prayer; you descend from heaven to earth when you carry God's commands and his word to men. Ascend, then, and descend, unceasingly—that is, pray and preach; speak to God, speak to men; first of all go up to receive, and then come down and shed your light; seek at the fountain-head, and bedew the ground that it may bring forth the fruit of life.”

Priests are God's angels, ever ascending and descending; they are the angel guardians who always see the face of the Father who is in heaven. Bossuet expressed the same idea, on another occasion, during the same year (1662) at the General Hospital, in the midst of the daughters of St Vincent de Paul, those souls who devote themselves to the care of the sick. He told them to stand always like angel guardians before the face of God. On that condition alone can any good be done. The priest who would not live on high would be a useless, earthly burden. A priest must not be useless; that would be a shame, a disgrace. Furthermore, whatever does not raise itself up, whatever crawls like the serpent, is wicked. Three-fourths of the time wickedness arises from pettiness, from shabby prejudices and anxieties; human passions, pride especially, lower a man. A priest should live on high that he may be good—good on all occasions, good to all men.

The glory of having inspired the establishment of seminaries is due to Fr. de Condren; seminaries were intended to bring together young men who had already been instructed in humane letters, who had studied philosophy, and were ready for theology. It was a realisation of the wishes of the Council of Trent; seminaries had already been begun in Italy and Spain, but their establishment had not been feasible in France. Cardinal de Lorraine at Rheims, and Cardinal de Joyeuse at Rouen had made an attempt; they had begun

with children, and Cardinal de Joyeuse, after six years, had succeeded in securing two priests, after having devoted the greater part of the revenues of his diocese to the work. The seminary at Rheims had become a lay school for the education of choristers.

So the work seemed impossible in France when Fr. de Condren gathered around him that small band of priests, of which he himself was the soul; among them was M. Olier, destined to found the seminary of St Sulpice.

M. Olier was born in 1608. This priest, destined to train so many other priests, had had a chequered youth (but not in the sense that phrase is understood today). When God wishes to call a priest whom he intends to train others, he makes him undergo a number of trials and states. Perhaps you think of a youth who is going to be a priest as a pious seminarist, specially trained, with his eyes always cast down, saying his little prayers with his hands joined, knowing absolutely nothing whatever about the world, and about to be thrown suddenly into the midst of unexpected dangers. No; that's not the case at all. The habit of living face to face with one's self, of studying one's self, mortifying one's passions and fighting with them at close quarters, teaches the priest to know, if not the world, at least, what the world is at bottom. There is no need to analyse, like La Bruyère, all the odd and strange things that go to make up the world. If certain wretchednesses of the soul are known, certain thoughts, certain littlenesses, then one knows the world. We carry about in ourselves a little world which helps us to see things in their principles, and when we meet them again in the world, or in the confessional, we say: "Oh! yes, I know you; I have gone through all that; I could even infer the causes and deduce the consequences." The study of the passions of one's own soul, as understood by Fr. de Condren, mortification of self is one of the best ways of knowing what human nature really is.

He passed his childhood in the society of his mother, a very devout woman, but rather narrow-minded. At a very early period it was settled that her son was to take orders, and he was provided with a good abbey, the Abbey of Pebrac; he belonged to a legal family in

which there had been many remarkable men. Madame Olier wished him to consecrate himself to God, to be pious, in a respectable way, but not excessively so (she wanted him to be virtuous, but not too much so!). From the point of view of vocation, I distrust people who indulge in religious practices, but are not generous. Madame Olier was such an one; she would have liked her son to give himself to God, but in moderation. There are some souls for whom that is impossible; when they give themselves, they do so entirely. If a voice has been heard speaking to the heart, "Give yourself to God," this is taken as "Give yourself wholly, not by halves; all or nothing." M. Olier had such an impetuous soul. If you saw him as a small boy chasing a bird and jumping on to a roof at the risk of breaking his neck, you might have said: "He will be a soldier or sailor; anything but a priest." On the contrary, he had the makings of a priest, because energy of soul is needed for self-command and the service of others.

M. Olier began by leading the same sort of life as many young Abbés of his time. He wore a purple costume—it was very pretty; he used to go, along with his friends, who had, like himself, entered the clerical state, to take a stroll at the fair of St Germain. It was the fashionable rendezvous in those days; people went to be amused at the fair of St Germain, and to have a drink at Mother ... I forget her name—Mother Somebody's bar. The preachers thundered against the custom, just as a little later on they thundered against Molière. But that did not stop M. Olier.

Whilst strolling along with his friends, he chanced to pass, in the Rue Pot-de-Fer, in front of a wine-merchant's shop. Within that shop there was a saint—Mary Rousseau. This barmaid was a seventeenth-century type. Whilst she measured out pints her soul was engaged in ceaseless prayer. God knows how to find saints everywhere, at the back of a shop and behind a bar. This woman was vowed to the mystical life and to unspeakable sufferings; the one thought in her mind was the reformation of the French clergy, and above all the clergy of the parish of St Sulpice. When she saw these young men she gently remonstrated with them on their conduct. You may say:

“What had that got to do with her?” But it had, because the priest belongs to everyone; he belongs to you, he belongs to the faithful, he is their glory or their shame; if he does not do them good, he does them harm. Just as our Lord ascended the Cross bearing along with him the souls of men, and all their miseries, so should the priest ascend the altar bearing with him not only the souls of those specially dear to him, but the souls of all men, and especially those of his own parish. If a priest be a bad priest, he is a traitor to the faithful. He is bound to speak to God on their behalf, to plead for them, and hence, if he be a bad priest, he is a centre of infection for his whole parish, and I quite understand how indignant they feel about him; he has not done his duty; he is guilty, not only in regard to God, to whom he has given himself, but in regard to men, who have a right to expect something from him.

Mary Rousseau’s remonstrances produced their effect; a word from the heart goes straight to the heart. All the same, M. Olier went on for some time leading a dissipated life—dissipated, I mean, for a cleric. Then he was converted, and found another holy soul to help him; very often that is the whole story of a priest’s life. We have seen how Fr. de Bérulle was helped by the Carmelite nuns, who associated themselves with the priestly mediation of our Saviour by their prayers and sacrifices. They could not be priests themselves, but they were victims, offering themselves up, like priests, in the spirit of the priesthood. In the same way M. Olier was helped by a holy nun whom he had not met; she was a Dominican nun. Mother Agnes, living at Langeac, near Brioude. Mother Agnes appeared to him. This fact was well authenticated in the seventeenth century; such a fact must, of necessity, have a real, divine value, if it be followed by a complete change of life, if a proud man grows humble, and an undevout man suddenly becomes holy. So, then, Mother Agnes appeared to M. Olier, who afterwards saw her in her own convent and recognised her. For many years she had offered herself to God that he might become a good priest. She was always at prayer, practising great mortifications—an angel of God on earth. He saw her in the convent parlour, and she trained him; God’s help came to him

through her.

On his return to Paris he was ordained priest, and began by devoting himself entirely to the poor. People said he was mad. They said he was madder when he refused a bishopric in order to devote himself to the poor in the most squalid slums. It was said of him, as it was of the apostles, "The man is drunk." {Acts 2:13} When our Lord is living in a heart, he bestows on it his own thoughts and feelings, and the heart is inclined towards the poor. Such was the disposition of St Vincent de Paul. So, too, is an angel guardian's heart for those who are suffering; he sees a certain likeness in them to the sorrows of Christ; he seeks in them for sorrow which is not to be found in heaven. When our Lord is living in a priest's soul he gives it an inclination towards the poor. Very often his ministry is more fruitful with the poor. The great are exacting, the poor are more grateful; their hearts more easily open and expand. And hence it would be a great misfortune if, in this world, where riches are so highly esteemed, people believed that wealth had the effect of making the priest look on the poor in one light and on the rich in another. The poor man might in despair say to himself: "Does this man who talks to us of heavenly riches think everything of earthly possessions? How can I believe him?" So here again you may see another motive for devotion to the poor.

M. Olier felt drawn towards the religious life. A priest living in the midst of the world has difficulties to contend with; from time to time he would like to feel he was less isolated, better protected; after consecrating himself to God he may feel a desire to safeguard this consecration by vows of poverty and obedience. That was how M. Olier felt, and Fr. de Condren had felt the same.

He was attracted, as Fr. de Condren had been, by an order — namely, the Carthusians. The seventeenth century was especially attracted to the solitary life. Hermitages were to be met with everywhere. There were hermits on Mount Valerien. Men who had led a rather worldly life were now living in a garden at Port Royal as solitaries, in the shadow of the monastery that sheltered great and holy women, of whom they became the squires; in a way they made

themselves lay brothers of that holy house. In those days this was not an isolated event, and in any history of Port Royal this fact should not be set down as if it were special to Port Royal. At Grosbois, near Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, under the walls of Paris, there was a monastery of Camaldolese monks vowed to a life of solitude. But M. Olier was attracted by the Carthusians; they represented for him the risen life. They had washed their feet, and were no longer soiled by the dust of this world; their life was an image of eternity, where one day is the same as the next; time was no more, eternity had begun; it was the piano no longer, it was the organ now that poured out its strains.

This attraction for a life of solitude, which is common to many holy priests, gives you a glimpse of how religious orders help priests, sustaining them, ever holding aloft the standard which the world perpetually tends to lower. When we see the lives men lead, and their constant dread of being duped; when we see what becomes of lofty ideals and generous feelings, we then strive to practise heroic virtue. The pastoral clergy does not make this manifest, because its members are isolated; it must shine out somewhere, and it does in the religious orders, which are like lighthouses lit up for the guidance of souls.... We were talking about the poor. Very well then. Now St Francis of Assisi gives us the ideal relationship between the priest and the poor; in the thirteenth century unity was a power in Christian society, and, in great part, the honour of this is due to the Franciscans. Now that is the use of religious orders, and that is how the priest himself, called to live in the world, should make use of the help of religious orders.

M. Olier did not become a Carthusian. He spent some time in giving missions in the country—the favourite work of St Vincent de Paul. A priest needs experience, and a knowledge of how to deal with souls and their wants. In this way God was preparing M. Olier for his parochial work.

Before confiding it to him, God made him undergo a horrible trial, a trial sent to those whom God especially calls to the work of guiding others—the trial of absolute spiritual dryness. We have

spoken of it in the case of Fr. de Condren, and of his serenity in this state of aridity; it seemed to him that everything he did was done through *arida consuetudo* {dry custom}, through routine, an effect of this aridity. A man asks himself, as St Augustine one day asked himself (it is one of the most heartrending passages in the *Confessions*), if he really loves God, and, like St Peter, he finds no answer to the question in his own heart. It is a piercing trial for a priest, on his way to the altar, to be forced to ask himself if he loves God. M. Olier was in such a state; it seemed to him as if he had lost all his powers and faculties, and was reduced to the state of a brute beast. If he wished to speak, he could not find a word to utter. God was letting him come to a knowledge of his own wretchedness. At the end of eighteen months he emerged from his trial with an understanding of the fact that it was only through the grace of God that he preserved his mental powers, that God might take away what he had given, and, consequently, that he should not live for himself, but for him who gave all; that he should not refer anything whatsoever to himself or to his own pleasure, but all things to him from whom he held all. That is what every soul destined to guide others goes through, and, above all, the priest, because he, more than all others, must avoid pride; this was the enemy, the monster ever present to the eyes of M. Olier. If you read his little book—it is extremely interesting—called an *Introduction to Life and the Christian Virtues* (it is wrongly attributed to Fr. de Condren), you will find a chapter headed: “On Self-Ownership.” In it you will find the extent to which the author has gone in his analysis of the human heart, not using the worldling’s microscope, but using a scalpel, without pity, in the study of his own heart. There is a chapter in it on the soul that no longer belongs to self. It is admirable in every respect. A man must have gone through a trial such as M. Olier’s to appreciate the hatefulness of pride. His trial also taught him to be compassionate. In order that the heart may be softened, it must first be pounded in a mortar, *cor contritum* {a contrite heart}. Above all, he had learnt in his trial what are the only necessary, the only true things. A priest may suffer from illusions as to what is the one thing necessary, or as to what he is capable of doing; he may believe in the power of his

own words. When one has gone through certain trials, one sees what the domain of necessary things may be reduced to; one sees, as at the hour of death, that it is just one point, *unum necessarium* {‘one thing necessary’; Luke 10:42}; one learns to say just one thing to souls: “Strip yourselves, love God, love your fellow-men.” What are those things you regard as so important? How small do they appear when one is suffering, as M. Olier suffered! If we were intent on the one thing necessary, we should not be so upset about trifles.

After having been prepared by such trials, M. Olier set to his task of establishing seminaries.

You know what a seminary is, and for what it is intended. Take a young man who has just read his philosophy, and intends to be a priest. He is urged to be one by the attraction, by the desire, of doing good, and getting to the depths of men’s souls. If, instead of being a priest, I were now talking to you as a professor, I should not speak as I am doing just now; what I should say then might do you some good, not very much; but there is another way of speaking, infinitely more efficacious — that of one soul speaking to another, bringing to it a gift of God’s. It is only when one feels that good is being done to others that one experiences the feeling that souls have been touched. Given God’s blessing on what is being said, there may be an instantaneous change. When a young man has such a vocation, and can say to himself: “I will do some good, I will do it there; I shall be strong enough to renounce certain things, I shall be able to leave my home without becoming an egoist or a self-seeker, because I trust that I shall love God, because I hope that he, to whom I have given myself, will also give himself to me, and with that I have enough...” — when a young man talks like that, he enters the Sulpician seminary at Issy.

What sort of a life does he lead there? Is it, first of all, a house of studies? Not at all. Theology is studied, but it is not exactly a place where they grow pale through poring over books; it would even seem that, in spite of the regularity of the life, it is by no means organised for study. They rise at five o’clock; the day begins with an hour’s prayer, made standing up, or kneeling down; that tires the mind, but humbles the spirit and brings it low. After that there is Mass and a

succession of duties, each brief enough, but leaving little time for oneself. Work must be put aside; just when ideas are beginning to come the bell rings for some other duty; this does a great deal for the soul, but not very much for the mind. In this way prolonged dreaming and fits of melancholy are avoided. Just as when streamlets are drained off from a mountain torrent it glides along as a smooth-flowing canal, so does the day flow on between the hours assigned for prayer.

Moral and dogmatic theology and the sacred Scriptures are studied, but when a man leaves the seminary he feels the need of making these studies all over again, just as, when a man leaves college, he sees that he must go over all his literary studies again.

The aim and end of a seminary, in M. Olier's eyes, might be reduced to two things — death to the old man, and union with our Lord. The story of M. Olier and the old gardener is well known. His wife, hearing nothing spoken about except "slaying the old man," thought it was her husband they had in mind, and the gardener asked permission to leave a house where they had sworn to take his life. To put to death the old man means to render the will so pliable that our Lord is able to take up his reign in it. "It is no longer I who live, but Jesus Christ who liveth in me." To belong no more to self will not suffice; we must live according to the mind and heart of Jesus Christ. We must say to ourselves: "Here am I in a set of circumstances similar to those in which our Lord was. I will place myself, when at the altar, in the dispositions he had during the Last Supper; in the confessional I will consider how he received sinners; in the pulpit I will remember the Sermon on the Mount, for if I do not speak according to the mind and heart of our Lord, I am a hypocrite, a monster, or I am only a voice, a sound corresponding to no idea. As I am to do what our Lord did, I must put myself in the same disposition of heart as he had when he acted, or, at least, I must strive to do so. He has given himself to me in the Eucharist in order to communicate his own spirit to me; therefore I will try to live according to his spirit.

That's what a seminary means. It is not a house of studies or a

SOME SPIRITUAL GUIDES OF THE 17TH CENTURY

place to learn how to preach and hear confessions (there is very little formation of that sort given at St Sulpice). It is a place where men strive to give themselves to God, to mortify whatever of evil may be in them, where they strive to kill an egoism that is ever reviving, so that they may unite themselves to our Lord and enter into his mind and heart.

Such is the training of the clergy as realised by M. Olier.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL (1576–1660)¹

I—THE SAINT: A SOWER OF GOOD WORKS.

I SHOULD like to say a few words to you today about the third priest I spoke of in connection with the revival of clerical life. I mean St Vincent de Paul. I had an idea of devoting several conferences to him, but I have been restrained by a scruple that may seem strange in a priest. It is this: he is, in a way, too good, too holy. Pascal translated a phrase of Tacitus thus: "Too much kindness is annoying." Well, no matter what the audience may be, too much holiness ... irritates is, perhaps, rather too strong a word, but tires may perhaps do. He is a little bit too rich, too unceasing, too overflowing in good works. Each of us has our own individuality, each of us lives by a breath from on high, and I should be afraid of wearying your attention, because I do not know how to set him forth sufficiently well.

We shall come back to his good works on some other occasion. Today I should like to give you an idea of the man, and his work.

If a stranger arrived in Paris about 1650 or 1652, in the time of the Fronde, he would have found the name of M. Vincent on every lip. Everything spoke of him. If you left Paris by the gate of St Denis, you would find yourself opposite the Priory of St Lazare, where M. Vincent's missionaries were being trained. And then, if you went along by the chapel you would find yourself in front of the house of the Sisters of Charity. On the left bank of the river, near the Church of St Nicholas du Chardonnet, was the house in which Mademoiselle le Gras² had received the first sisters, and not very far away was the

¹. March 9, 1878.

². Mademoiselle le Gras. Louise de Marillac, daughter of Louis de Marillac, and niece of the famous Marshal de Marillac, who was beheaded owing to his opposition to Richelieu, was born in Paris on August 12, 1591. She married Anthony le Gras, secretary of Marie de Medicis, on February 5, 1613. Her husband

Collège des Bons Enfants, where the work of the missionaries had begun.

At the General Infirmary, where the Ladies of Charity had begun to visit the sick, only M. Vincent was spoken of.

Still further off stood a huge building, the General Hospital, called La Salpêtrière, where tramps and old people up to the number of four thousand were received.

If you left Paris by the gate opposite to that of St Denis — Bicêtre — once more everything spoke of M. Vincent.

A sower of works of charity. What a sower of good works! Living works, deep-rooted works that will last! Something like the grain of mustard-seed, which, after having barely been sown, shoots up into a great tree, and how many are sheltered beneath those spreading branches, all living by virtue of the same sap — the spirit of charity! Very little remains to-day of the Paris of those times, but you may still find M. Vincent's works in the seminaries, in the Sisters of Charity, in the Vincentians, in the hospitals. He is no less great today; in matter of fact he is greater in the nineteenth century than he was in the seventeenth.

If I wished to get to know M. Vincent just a little I should try and get an introduction to one of the meetings of the Ladies of Charity over which he presided. He held a general meeting only once a year and then he gave an address; but he often presided over district meetings, in spite of all his occupations, and then he used to make a little speech. If you came looking for genius, that something which shone in the eyes of Bossuet, that flowed from his lips in living and impetuous words, you would be a little bit disappointed. M. Vincent did not belong to that school. His countenance was a trifle

died in 1625. She was a friend of St Francis de Sales, who placed her under the spiritual direction of Pierre le Camus. In 1625 St Vincent became her spiritual guide, and in 1633 she founded with his co-operation the Daughters of Charity. She died on March 15, 1660. See *Louise de Marillac*, by Lady Lovat (Burns and Oates, London).

inexpressive, but people loved to listen to him; the sweetness of his words penetrated the hearts of his hearers; it did not force them open, it flowed in drop by drop; you felt as if you were listening to God himself.

II — (a) HIS SLOWNESS.

The ladies found fault with him; he did not go fast enough. They were all ardour, all fire and flame. Once the flame of good deeds was kindled in their generous hearts they wanted to spread it; but raging zeal runs a risk of going headlong, and M. Vincent worked slowly. He sowed. If he saw the tender shoot pushing up he lavished all his care on what had taken root, and then, little by little, just in proportion as the works fulfilled the conditions he had laid down, he gave them a fixed shape, and made use of time to aid him — that is to say, he acted as God's providence does in establishing things. And so they thought him slow: "He is so kind, he is charity itself; but isn't he slow?"

The saint replied by speaking of the ark that Noah took a hundred years to build. He also spoke of the hidden life of our Lord, that lasted thirty years in Nazareth, before he began his public life, which lasted for only three years. You feel that he wanted to build the exterior on the interior. You feel, even in the case of the Daughters of Charity, whom he sent out in all directions to comfort the poor, that he wanted, first of all, to establish a spirit of prayer; energy in doing good would develop of itself. What he wanted was to see after the interior, to unite the soul to God, to make it strike root, to grow in the life of the spirit; after that he could be certain of external success, which would not be the result of haste, or infatuation, but just the work of charity, as he conceived it — that is to say, of the love of God blossoming out into the love of the neighbour.

That is M. Vincent's character: just precisely that apparent slowness. He reproached the ladies — in a phrase that was often on his lips — for outstripping Providence. He wanted to follow Providence. They were always telling him that he was not moving

fast enough, and yet you see all that he has done. No man ever did more. And yet he went step by step, and he forced the impatient to keep pace with him, and he kept pace with the providence of God; it was the pace of a man who wished to establish his works on the foundation of the love of God, on that inner life which is just as necessary for a support as for a foundation.

(b) HIS SIMPLICITY IN PREACHING.

His words were moving, and they were very simple; simplicity, humility, was the watchword of his sermons. They are not sermons, if you like, but just a flow of words—words closely connected together, because there is a spirit in them that makes them live, *spiritus intus alit* {nourishes the spirit within}. St Paul speaks of charity as the bond of perfection. Well, charity is like a golden chain on which pearls and precious stones are strung; the chain linking them together makes a beautiful necklace of them, and it is such a golden chain—the very spirit of charity—that binds together all M. Vincent's natural and supernatural faculties. His eloquence, extremely simple, is alive with the spirit of charity, and it is the spirit of charity that gives it its unity. You feel that he never moves away from a central point.

Would you like, when we come out from the meeting of the Ladies of Charity, to call at the house of Mademoiselle le Gras, not far from St Lazare?

III — MADEMOISELLE LE GRAS.

She was a devout widow, the daughter of M. de Marillac, and St Vincent was her spiritual director; she took young country girls into her home. St Vincent did not often visit them; he did not waste himself, and besides, his legs were weak. It is true the Duchesse d'Aiguillon made him a present of a carriage, a little bit out of date, but he hated the carriage, and looked upon himself as the most wretched of men. Mademoiselle le Gras was a very humble, very self-

effacing, very recollected person. She used to say that noise never did any good, and that good made no noise. St Vincent's spirit passed into her heart, and she formed a group of souls to whom she communicated it. She trained, we have said, young country girls who had a religious vocation, or rather a vocation for self-sacrifice, which she rendered permanent by a rule of life. (A mischievous Jesuit at the end of the century, comparing the Daughters of Charity with the Vincentians, said that St Vincent was luckier in his daughters than in his sons.) These sisters are bound to lead lives of prayer. They rise at four o'clock, and all day long they must not forget their life of union with God. A soul consecrated by vows should not do good in the same way as a person living in the world. It should keep closer to the fountain-head, nearer to God, and it should, as far as possible, efface itself so that the divine action may be more complete in and through it.

IV — ST LAZARE: THE RETREATS FOR ORDINANDS.

Beyond St Laurence's Church lay the Priory of St Lazare; it depended on the old Abbey of Montmartre, which had been reformed by Marie de Beauvilliers,¹ who had died a short time previously, leaving her memory in benediction. Well now, St Lazare was St Vincent de Paul's headquarters. The Prior, who admired him very much, was anxious to supply the new congregation with a home, and he just handed over the Priory, which was one of the finest buildings in Paris. There were some lunatics at St Lazare, and the saint took charge of them himself, looking on it as a great happiness to be able to tend them. They were expelled during the Fronde, to St Vincent's great grief, for these lunatics were men to whom one could do good for the sake of God alone, since they were neither conscious of, nor grateful for, the care taken of them. He

¹. Marie de Beauvilliers was born in 1574, and when ten years old became a novice at the Abbey of Beaumont les Tours. She made her vows in 1590, and in 1598 went to Montmartre to undertake the reform of the relaxed convent, in which she perfectly succeeded. She was greatly helped by Fr. Benedict Canfield, an English Franciscan, and by Fr. Angélus de Joyeuse. She died on April 21, 1657.

reserved the privilege of looking after them to himself alone.

The new congregation of Missioners was collected at St Lazare, and this was its object: when St Vincent had been a chaplain to M. de Gondi,¹ the General of the galley slaves, he used often to visit M. de Gondi's estates in Picardy, at Joigny and Montmirail, where he was able to see for himself the needs of the country folk. One day—in Picardy—he heard a peasant's general confession, and he was greatly struck with the ignorance of the poor people. They were scarcely human. And he repeated the loud cry of the Psalmist, calling for the Incarnation, "*Ut sciant gentes quia homines sunt*:"² Show thyself, that the pagans may at least know they are men!" Men, in certain circumstances, forget they are men. He recalled to mind the poor slaves he had seen in Tunis, or in the galleys at Marseilles or Toulon. He had never forgotten these poor creatures, and he gathered some priests around him to give them missions from time to time, to teach them the Catechism, and to ease their consciences, which were sometimes a little disturbed.

In the country there may be some little embarrassment in one's relations with the parish priest. I do not suggest any indiscretion on his part, but only that one may be brought into too close contact with him. How can he be told that one has committed a theft? Such a thing might occur, and, moreover, one's conscience may be burdened by certain sins, and then the soul grows quite sick. St Vincent feared that, and hence he sent his priests to hear general confessions.

Their first attempt had shown him the necessity for such country missions, and so, when he had gathered around him some priests, such as Fr. Portail³ and others, he established the Congregation of

¹ Philippe Emmanuel de Gondi, General of the galleys, on the death of his wife in 1625, joined the Oratory, and spent the remainder of his life in the practice of the Christian and religious virtues. He died at Joigny on June 22, 1662.

² Psalm ix 21.

³ Anthony Portail was born in 1590, and went to Paris to study at the Sorbonne. He became acquainted with and attached to St Vincent in 1612, and from that until

the Mission.

He always recommended the same thing to the Missioners: simplicity (you remember what he said to them about the society of Peter, James, and John). He trained them in the sacerdotal virtues, and this with all the greater care as they were in turn to teach these virtues to priests by giving them retreats before ordination, and by directing seminaries. (They still do so in some dioceses.)

St Vincent should be listened to speaking about the country people. La Bruyère has written pages, with the stamp of genius on them, about the peasant as he stands bowed over his toil. La Bruyère was an artist, a worker in enamel. There is not a scrap of that about St Vincent, but I should like you to note the tone and spirit of his remarks.

He is standing in the midst of those evils that escape the attention of historians. Famine is raging, as it had raged on many another occasion. We have no idea whatever, at the present day, of what these evils were like then. At that time everything contributed to them: carelessness, forestalling, mistaken lines of policy adopted by the State, which as yet had no true ideas on political economy. Famines were of frequent occurrence. We may see this from Bossuet's sermons, in which we can feel a touching love for the poor; we may see it from his impassioned pleadings, based on the very spirit of Christianity, in favour of those who suffered.

Now let us listen to what St Vincent de Paul said: "O my Saviour, what a number of people there are actually suffering! If we have seen so much want here, in the very heart of France, where there is plenty all around us, during the four years the war has been going on, what must the poor people living on the frontiers, exposed as they are to all sorts of miseries and suffering, from these scourges for the last twenty years, be undergoing? If they have sown their crops, they

the day of his death he may be said to have been the saint's right-hand man. He was the first member of the new congregation, the first assistant of St Vincent in his office of General of the order. He died a few months before the saint, on February 14, 1660.

have no idea as to whether they will be able to reap them; armies come along and pillage everything, sergeants come and carry off what the privates have left behind.... These poor folk have a lively faith; they believe with simplicity, and they are submissive to the orders of God and patient in the direst extremities.”

Would St Vincent say as much for them today?

“They patiently bear all that God may be pleased to send them, at one time from the horrors of war, at another from the severity of their daily work; they are worn out by toil, exposed to the heat of the sun and the inclemency of the weather; these poor working men, these poor vine-dressers, living by the sweat of their brows, provide us with the fruits of their labour, and they expect that we at least should pray to God on their behalf.

“Ah! my brethren, whilst they wear themselves out working to feed us, we look for shade and rest!” (What a beautiful trait to be so ashamed of oneself in the midst of comfort!)

“Even when at work on the missions we are, at any rate, sheltered from inclement weather in the churches, not exposed to winds, and rain, and the rigours of winter. Surely, surely, since we thus live by the sweat of these poor folk, and on the patrimony of Jesus Christ, we should always think, as we go to the refectory, if we have earned the food we are about to eat. As for myself, the thought often occurs to me, to my own exceeding shame, and I say to myself: ‘Wretch! Have you earned the bread you are about to eat, the bread you receive from the labours of the poor?’ At any rate, my brethren, if we do not earn it as we should, let us pray to God on their behalf, and let no day pass without our offering them up to our Lord that he may be pleased to grant them the grace of making a good use of their sufferings.” What a spirit of charity!

“We said a few days ago that God expects priests above all to stay the course of his wrath. He expects them to act as Aaron did, and stand, thurible in hand, between him and these poor people; or constitute themselves mediators, like Moses, to obtain a cessation of the ills which they suffer in punishment for their ignorance and

sins, and which they would not be enduring now had they been instructed....

“Hence we are bound to render the poor these offices of charity in order that we may at the same time carry out the duties of our priestly office, and repay them, in some way, for the goods we receive from their labours....”

In this fashion St Vincent shows how the priest is under obligation to the poor, as are the rich also. It may be said that God looks after the salvation of the rich by leaving the poor to their care; in this way he has also provided for their own only real happiness, for a time comes when there is no longer a joy in possessing save on the condition of expending it on the poor.

It is a profoundly Christian idea thus to see the priest under obligations to the poor.

“... We should intercede for them with the divine mercy, and charity obliges us to stretch out our hands to them ... and if we do not devote ourselves, even at the expense of our lives, to instruct and help them to perfect conversion, then we are, in a way, the causes of all the ills they endure.”

That is another moving idea: to seek for the source of the ills of others in ourselves; let the father examine himself; let each of us impute the faults of the community to himself, instead of accusing his neighbour.

HIS HUMILITY.

Yet, by dint of self-accusation, St Vincent's humility seemed exaggerated; it grates just a little. The Ladies of Charity, at their meetings, might have said to one another: “Really, he is tiresome on account of all the bad things he says about himself! Humility would seem more real if it were less apparent. It's annoying to hear him always calling himself a wretch.... What are we, then?”

St Vincent saw his own soul in God's light. A pure conscience has

a clearer view of its imperfections than one that has been hardened by sin; a soul in a state of sin does not really understand what the state of sin actually is. Furthermore, St Vincent had such a high idea of the divine action that he was always afraid of putting himself, like a cloud, between the plant and the sun which is destined to bring it to life; he was afraid lest anything of himself might come between the Word of God and the souls of his hearers. He trembled lest any of his actions might be a hindrance to God's grace. He had such a vivid sense of divine things that he had a sort of terror of misinterpreting them. He was like a man with a perfectly exquisite ideal who wishes to express it, and making an effort, finds his hands are powerless: "*Bis patriae cecidere manus.*" {'Twice, father's hands fell'; *Aeneid* VI.32} His hands will fall to his sides over and over again! The artist blames his hand for giving such a poor rendering of the vision of his soul. St Vincent de Paul blamed the instrument for turning out such a wretched copy of what had been revealed to him by our Lord; it was not preoccupation with self, but fear of being an obstacle between God and souls, fear lest he should give a bad reproduction of the divine ideal. When such an ideal is concerned with charity, its realisation is infinitely more important than the artist's. The artist experiences a passionate need of rendering his vision, yet he is not subject to the terrible law, nor blessed with the cruel gift, of holiness.

THE ORDINANDS.

The work closest to St Vincent's heart, the one he prized above all others, was that of the ordinands; it sprang from the depths of his priestly heart united with the heart of our Lord, from the sufferings of his own heart in union with those of the Heart of his Saviour. He says somewhere that the keenest grief our Lord experienced was the sight of those who held him in their hands, who bore him from place to place, who consecrated his Body and Blood, renouncing and betraying him. Hence the work of St Vincent's heart, of his most intimate sufferings and prayers, was that of preparing young

deacons for the priesthood.

They did not remain with him very long — M. Olier had not yet established his three years' course of preparation for the priesthood; he had them for only ten days, but what a use he made of the time! He instructed them, taught them, in a practical way, how to make a meditation, initiated them into the duties of their state, taught them the rubrics, and all the rules for the celebration of Mass and the ceremonies of the Church.

He was always with them, ever spending himself; he would have had to be very ill indeed not to be present at an ordination.

We see the most remarkable priests gathered around him. Bossuet made his preparation for the priesthood at St Lazare, and gratefully remembered it when he made his deposition at the process for St Vincent's canonisation. He preached there four years after the retreat he had made for his ordination. Perhaps St Vincent told him his sermon was not simple enough ... and perhaps, too, the young orator had him in mind when he spoke, in his panegyric on St Paul, of "the outspokenness" of the saints.

St Vincent taught his priests to preach simply. Simplicity is ever the best ornament, and truths are "most efficacious" when simply expressed. "What am I to teach them?" he used to say. "Shall I teach them theology? Shall I quote authors at them? Certainly not; these young people from the college of Narbonne, where they have made excellent studies, often know more than I do. To do so would be to take up a position where I should be weaker than they."

What should a preacher say? Face to face with a congregation, his strength lies in uttering the truths he teaches, not as if coming from himself, but from God. If he takes up a scientific topic, he may be despised by the learned, who are better acquainted with scientific terms than himself. Let us stand on our own ground, and rely on God's Word, which is fitted for the hearts of those who are obliged to give ear to it. The Word of God is a seed which God has suited to the soil on which it is to fall, and from which it should bring forth fruit. That was St Vincent's point of view, and it is the correct one.

SOME SPIRITUAL GUIDES OF THE 17TH CENTURY

A famous preacher on one occasion allowed himself, in the saint's presence, to go on spinning phrases. (Before Bourdaloue there was a slight temptation to imitate Bossuet's "grand manner.") Suddenly, in the midst of one of those harmonious periods that say too much to the ear and too little to the heart, M. Vincent might have been seen throwing himself on his knees, at the feet of the orator, and saying: "Oh, Father! I beg you speak more simply."

He loved to tell the story of a Jesuit, renowned for his preaching, who, one fine day, reflecting on the poor results of his oratory, humbly made up his mind to teach only the catechism in future. The holy man asked to have the little ferule he used whilst teaching the children buried with him, because he considered the little rod he had used whilst teaching them to read, and in correcting them, as the most precious proof of his own value, and the object he most relied on for the kingdom of heaven.

HIS SPIRITUAL FORMATIONS: THE DE GONDIS AND THE GALLEY SLAVES.

St Vincent's mission was revealed to him late in life. He was born in 1576.¹ Consider the training he went through! God guides very, very slowly those whom he calls on to produce great results. If St Vincent went rather slowly to work on whatever he took up, it was because he knew God proceeds slowly and surely. He was destined to relieve all sorts of material and spiritual misery, and God let him have an experience of them all.

He was ordained priest in 1600, in his twenty-fourth year.

On a sea voyage from Marseilles to Cette (I am leaving out a great deal that is very well known) he was captured by pirates and taken to Barbary. He there converted the master to whom he had been sold, and God let him see the wretched lot of Christian slaves sold into bondage on the coast of Africa. This fact would never have been known if he had not written a letter at the time to one of his friends. When he heard, later on, that the letter was in existence he wanted,

¹. The actual date of the saint's birth is April 24, 1581.

at any cost, to get it back and destroy it. It was only preserved by a pious ruse of the Vincentians. We may easily see from that fact alone how humble St Vincent really was.

He was chaplain for a short time to Queen Margaret;¹ he was also entrusted with a mission from Cardinal d'Ossat to Henry IV. And at length he went to the De Gondis. This was a noble family in which the bishopric of Paris seemed to be hereditary. The first Archbishop of Paris was a De Gondi.² St Vincent became a tutor of his brother's children; one of his pupils (it must have been a great trial to him) was the famous Cardinal de Retz,³ who was as sarcastic as St Vincent was charitable; he had marvellous skill in etching a portrait, an incredible malice in making faults stand out in relief. St Vincent did not teach him how to do that.

After his wife's death M. de Gondi became an Oratorian Father. Madame de Gondi⁴ was an admirable woman, but, at times, she must have been a little bit trying to St Vincent; she was devoured

¹ Marguerite de Valois, "La Reine Margot," was born in 1553; she was the daughter of Henry II and Catherine de Medici. She married Henry of Navarre, afterwards Henry IV, but their marriage was declared null by the Pope. Some historians state that St Vincent was the bearer of this declaration of annulment when in 1610 he arrived in Paris. Queen Marguerite died in 1615.

² The bishopric of Paris was erected into an archbishopric in 1622 (R.).

³ Jean François Paul de Gondi, son of Philippe Emmanuel and Françoise Marguerite de Silly, was born in 1613. He was nominated coadjutor to his uncle on June 13, 1643, and consecrated Bishop on January 31, 1644. Through the influence of the Queen, Anne of Austria, he obtained a Cardinal's hat in 1652. Mazarin had him imprisoned in Vincennes and afterwards at Nantes, from which he escaped to Rome. He resigned the archbishopric in 1662 and was made Abbot of St Denis. He altered his erratic mode of life, and the last four years of it were spent in prayer and good works. He died on August 24, 1679. As a writer he is known to fame by his *Mémoires*.

⁴ Françoise Marguerite de Silly, Baroness de Montmirail, was born in 1580. Her father was Anthony de Silly, Count de Rochefort, some time Ambassador to Spain, and her mother was Marie de Launoy. She died on June 23, 1625, after having had St Vincent nominated principal of the Collège des Bons Enfants. She helped him to establish his congregation by a gift of 45,000 livres, and St Vincent always referred to her as the foundress of the Congregation of the Mission.

with scruples, not the sort of scruples that spring from a weak mind or a perpetual preoccupation with self; they rose from a fear of committing sin. I should like to paint a portrait of Madame de Gondi—the portrait of a scrupulous soul; it would be interesting from the point of view of St Vincent's type of spiritual direction, but I have made up my mind not to say too much on that subject.

There are some scruples which are based on an unconquerable obstinacy, on a spirit of resistance, pushed to the uttermost extreme.

Other scruples—such as Madame de Gondi's—arise from fear of offending God, even in trifles, and such a fear terrorises a soul that desires to belong wholly to God. She needed St Vincent; he alone could soothe her. In her he revered a really beautiful soul, beloved by God. God kept him at her side for a long period of time in order to let him see what the heart of a woman is capable of, its happy ideas and generous initiatives. Madame de Gondi had extremely happy suggestions to make about the works she undertook, in spite of the uneasiness and torment of her mind. She taught St Vincent the infinite resources of a Christian soul, and so, later on, he was never mistrustful of the zeal of the Ladies of Charity, he was never afraid lest their resources should fail; he knew the joy of giving. Once that bait has been nibbled at, there is no longer any possibility of rejecting the happiness of self-sacrifice.

And that's the reason why God's providence kept him with the Gondis for such a length of time.

Moreover, M. de Gondi was General of the galleys. These were vessels, built on the model of the ancient triremes, that sailed the Mediterranean. The Kings of France were rather proud of the speed of these vessels. They were big ships—the *Reale* is well known from historical memoirs—where poor convicts in red jackets manned the oars; a ship propelled by human arms travelled two leagues an hour. The galley slaves were the most unfortunate wretches in the world. There were about four thousand of them when Colbert was minister; they were scarcely human. In Louis XIV's time justice was administered harshly. As experience showed that it was a difficult task to

train rowers, and as their labour at first was worthless, Colbert demanded that the two first years at the galleys should not be regarded as part of the sentence. Besides the convicts there was a motley crowd of men abandoned by heaven and earth; there were Turks among them remarkable for their strength. "As strong as a Turk." Surely it was on the galleys that they earned the right to that appellation.

St Vincent went amongst them, like St Peter Claver¹ amongst the negroes. He knew there was something to be hoped for from these wretched men, *quia homines sunt* {because they are human}. In the purple rags that covered the convict's shoulders he recognised not only our Lord's mantle, but his Blood clothing them with the infinite resources of his grace. St Vincent bent over these poor men *ut sciant gentes quia homines sunt* {'that the Gentiles may know themselves to be men', Ps 9:21}.

At the De Gondis' he also learnt the extent of the ignorance and neglect of the peasantry. Country folk today, the country folk around Paris, are not so much ignorant as selfish; they adore the earth, not in the shape of a statue, but in the plot of ground they have manured, from which they expect their crops, and that is the reason why both the love of God and of their neighbour has perished in them.

St Vincent saw this sad state of affairs, but it would not be correct to attribute exclusively to him the beginning of their evangelisation. There was a Jesuit who, from 1625 to 1640, had devoted himself to the work with admirable zeal and charity; this was St Francis Regis,² the apostle of the Vivarais; he began his mission in Protestant countries, and kept on giving missions for fifteen years. In Brittany

^{1.} St Peter Claver, "the apostle of the negroes," was born in Catalonia, Spain, in 1581. He joined the Society of Jesus in 1601, and in 1610 went to Cartagena, where he laboured for over forty years on behalf of the negro slaves. He died in 1654, was beatified by Pius IX in 1850, and canonised by Leo XIII in 1888.

^{2.} St John Francis Regis (1597-1640) joined the Society of Jesus in 1616. He began his missionary career in 1632, and carried it on till his death in the mountain hamlet of La Louvesc in the Ardèche. He was beatified in 1716 and canonised in 1737.

Fathers Le Noblets and Maunoir had permeated the hearts of the peasantry around Vannes with the Christian spirit. But these were isolated attempts. St Vincent's merit lay in organising the work by establishing a congregation with the object of preaching the Gospel to the poor.

He was also interested in foreign missions. His heart was so large that it embraced any place where a victory might be won for Christ. And so he thought of such distant mission fields as Barbary, where he had suffered; Madagascar; the Levant, where the greatness of France was bound up with Catholic interests; and the Vincentians were sent on missions to Greece, to the Archipelago, and to Syria.

But his efforts were not confined to missions organised by himself. If you had gone down the Rue du Bac in those days — that is to say, about 1640 — you might have seen Monsignor Pallu,¹ the founder of the foreign missions; he was Bishop of Babylon *in partibus* {in the lands [of the unbelievers]}, hence the name of that street. Jesuits, too, like Fr. Jogues,² had begun to evangelise Canada, where they wished to found a city dedicated to the Blessed Virgin — Marytown. St Vincent de Paul aided all these efforts; he kept aloof from none of them. His heart was an inexhaustible treasure.

At the corner of the Rue des Bernardins and the Quay, quite close to St Nicholas du Chardonnet, Madame de Miramion³ had begun a

¹ François Pallu, born at Tours in 1625, Canon of St Martin. Whilst on a pilgrimage to Rome he induced Pope Alexander VII to erect vicariates apostolic in the Far East. Propaganda approved of the project on May 13, 1658, and Pallu was nominated Bishop of Heliopolis.

² Isaac Jogues, born at Rouen in 1607, joined the Society of Jesus in 1624. He went to Canada in 1636 and devoted himself to the conversion of the Red Indians [*sic.*]. He returned in 1643 for a brief visit to Europe, and was back in Canada in 1644. Whilst endeavouring to negotiate a peace he was seized by the Iroquois and martyred in 1646. The cause of his canonisation has been introduced, and he was beatified in 1925.

³ Madame de Miramion was born in Paris on November 26, 1629, the daughter of Jacques Bonneau, councillor and secretary to the King. She married Jean Jacques de Beauharnais, Seigneur de Miramion, who died on November 2, 1645.

number of good works (you may remember that she was the young widow whom that dreadful Bussy-Rabutin abducted in the middle of the Bois de Boulogne for the sake of her money, urged on to it, as rumour had it, by her confessor!...). Madame de Miramion almost rivalled Mademoiselle le Gras. She had established a work-room, an asylum for penitents, etc. All that emanated from St Vincent de Paul. Sunbeams cannot be counted, nor can the sunbeams radiating from the hearts of saints into which our Lord has shed a little of his own sunshine be counted.

To perform works of charity in those days was not merely a fashion, it was a necessity, and it was not only women such as Madame de Miramion who performed them, but women like the Princess Palatine (whose funeral sermon was preached by Bossuet). She established a home for old men, and spent not only her superfluous wealth on it, but even money she badly needed for herself.

Take a name still less devout, or, if you prefer, a more characteristic one — take Madame de Montespan;¹ she, too, threw herself into doing good. She was a little bit annoying, buzzing around, one of those people who want to do everything themselves. She had a home for young girls, called after St Joseph; she ruled them, and busied herself about getting them married. When one of her girls refused an offer that she herself approved of, she wrote, with a spelling as lofty as her style, of “those sort of scum that nothing can be made of.” If I had been one of her young girls I would have cleared off at the first glimpse of her.

When we do a good turn to our neighbour, and keep on doing it,

She joined the Ladies of Charity in 1649, and devoted her life to good works. Her spiritual director, towards the end of her life, was Fr. Edmund Joly, one of St Vincent's successors in the generalship of the Congregation. She died on March 24, 1696. Madame de Sévigné called her one of the “Mothers of the Church,” and considered her death “a public calamity.”

¹ Françoise Athenaïs de Pardillan, Marquise de Montespan (1641–1707), was one of the most notorious figures at the Court of Louis XIV, by whom she had seven children. On her conversion in 1691 she retired to the convent of St Joseph. The last years of her life were spent in doing penance.

charity is developed by repeated acts, and as there are not two kinds of charity, one of God and another of one's neighbour, we cannot devote ourselves to the service of the poor without seeing God hidden behind their features. Madame de Montespan came to that; she arrived at the love of God, at a love for penance. She cleverly concealed her mortifications, which were severe, and under fine linen wore a hair shirt to macerate her flesh.

I mention these two names, the Princess Palatine and Madame de Montespan, because they are not looked on as exactly devout. Very well, then, St Vincent was the centre of all that charitable movement.

ST VINCENT'S MOTIVES.

What was the motive that animated him? Was it philanthropy? An infinite compassion for human misery? Compassion does not suffice to effect what he did.

There is a sort of compassion that is almost physical; it may exist in persons who are anything but tender. They cannot bear the sight of a cat that has been hurt, or a dog with a sore paw; they will say to you: "Take it away!" Such compassion was to be met with even amongst the pagans. But if it be separated from charity it perishes quickly.

Galen, the celebrated Greek physician, who lived in Rome under the Antonines—it was a relatively humane period, and Christian ideas had begun partly to penetrate it—Galen speaks of the usefulness of dissecting slaves. It was the custom to practise vivisection, and to make autopsies on living slaves. Galen was a man of high ideals; he was a philosopher, like Hippocrates—both of them believed in the existence of the soul—and he said such experiments cannot be shirked, but they should, as far as possible, be made on animals, and vivisection should not be practised on living slaves save in cases of absolute necessity. That was pagan compassion; it does not go very far.

St Vincent de Paul was moved by something infinitely higher: the love of God, charity, the charity that does not love one's neighbour

for his own sake, but for the sake of God. That is, God is loved in our neighbour; consequently he is always loved, no matter who our neighbour may chance to be. That is the new commandment given by our Lord. Charity is a gift of God's: *Caritas diffusa est in cordibus vestris per Spiritum sanctum* {'Love [charity] has been poured forth into our hearts through the Holy Spirit', Rom 5:5}. Charity is the love whereby God loves his own creatures; it is the love he has poured forth into men's hearts; it is a love that is his very own, descending from him to take up whatever place it may find in our hearts; it is a divine feeling that reveals to man his fellow-men, not merely as creatures of God, but as redeemed by Jesus Christ. The spirit of charity is not merely a love that inclines us to good; it is a love of predilection, causing us to desire the welfare of those we love, in accordance with the petition set out in the *Pater Noster*, "Hallowed be thy name," by men whom thou didst create to bless thee, men who know and bless thee so seldom! "Thy Kingdom come" on this poor earth, so arid and so barren.

That is the spirit our Lord desired for his Apostles, when, after having given them himself at the Last Supper, he said: "*Mandatum novum do vobis* {'I give you a new commandment', John 13:34}. I pour forth into your hearts what is in my own."

Hence the Apostle can say, *Hoc sentite in vobis, quod et in Christo* {'Let this mind be in you, which was in Christ', Phil 2:5} because this commandment is to be the sign whereby Christ's disciples may be known; the sign of their union with him is that they love one another.

What is charity in a priest? When a priest holds our Lord in his hands he is gripped by the great idea of the moral union of the body and its Head, of Jesus Christ and his members. When he sees in the sufferings of these members the same sufferings that our Lord willed to undergo, he experiences a more intimate, a more penetrating obligation to practise charity, and the most cutting reproach it is possible to make to Christian souls is *sine corde fuerunt* {they were heartless}. They were heartless, because they did not see God in their

neighbour.

And that is the reason of the blend of an element of severity and close union with God that you may notice in St Vincent's life, which was so utterly devoted to his neighbour, for he felt the need, both for himself and his followers, of being reinvigorated at the source and fountain-head of all charity.

Surely St Vincent *went about doing good*. And yet—who would believe it?—objections were raised to his canonisation. Yes; he was accused of being wanting in character, of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds, of having sat at Mazarin's¹ side in the council chamber.

He certainly did so, and he did it for the best. On one occasion Richelieu observed M. Meyster, one of M. Olier's companions, and he was struck by his cheerful and unselfish holiness, which is so attractive because it is the mark of a soul that no longer lives for itself, but spends itself entirely for the sake of others. The thought occurred to him which occurs to us all when face to face with the saints: "If it is necessary to act like that, how, then, am I to be saved?" At last he mentioned the matter to M. Meyster, who answered: "What you should do is try and regenerate God's Church, and nominate only men of tried virtue for bishoprics." Richelieu carried out that rule.

St Vincent de Paul sat at the Queen's council to do the same thing, to watch over the granting of benefices, and he kept a very strict watch. Should he, then, because Mazarin was not a thoroughly moral man, because he was a gambler, because he was this or that, should he have withdrawn from the council? Would that have been just coming to terms with evil?... He was also accused of not having taken sides between the King and the Fronde. Charity is for all men.

¹. Jules Mazarin (1602-1661) was born of a noble Sicilian family. In 1630 he negotiated a treaty between the French and Spanish, and in this way came under Richelieu's notice. He was made nuncio in 1634. After Richelieu's death he carried on his master's policy. In the Jansenist quarrels he made himself remarkable by his strong opposition to the party.

Would St Vincent have drawn a distinction between Condé's and Turenne's¹ soldiers in case they were brought to him? Charity is very much wider than that, and the one beautiful feature in these civil wars was the universality of his charity. The Blood of Jesus, the Heart of Jesus is for all men.

¹ Henri de la Tour d'Auvergne, Vicomte de Turenne (1611–1675), was like Condé one of the great exponents of the art of war in the seventeenth century. He was a Huguenot, and after serving in Holland entered the service of France in 1620. Chiefly through Bossuet's influence he became a Catholic in 1668.

THE ABBÉ DE RANCÉ¹ I

(1626–1700)

HIS INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

I AM very grateful to those who have come today in such large numbers. To come in such cold weather is a virtuous act, worthy of the Abbé de Rancé of whom I am going to speak. I just notice one fact, and that is that the young people are not so numerous as the grown-ups. Perhaps they are not as courageous; at any rate that's what is said nowadays.

Very well, then; I am going to talk to you about the Abbé de Rancé and the beginning of the Trappist reform. If I were to give a detailed account there would be much to say about its different aspects, and of the various ways it might be regarded. The Abbé de Rancé exercised a great influence on the seventeenth century. No matter what memoirs on the Court of Louis XIV you may open, you will find something about La Trappe, and that not by way of repulsion, but attraction, the attraction felt for human nature when found to be something greater than itself. People say, "It's very remote from me; I could not do anything like that," but, in matter of fact, they feel that there is a revelation of human nature presented by those religious who sacrificed all, not merely earthly desires, but all pleasures, even those that are perfectly legitimate, and then a feeling of admiration arises in the soul. A man cannot remain indifferent, however little he may think about spiritual things, when brought face to face with such a spectacle as La Trappe.

Bossuet often turned towards it, for thence it was that he expected the prayers to help him in the difficulties he experienced during his life at Court. Not only did he look on the Abbé de Rancé as an excel-

¹. 1 December 7, 1879 (R.).

lent religious, but much more did he regard him as a friend.... They were almost the same age — the Abbé de Rancé was a year older than Bossuet; they had been fellow-students, and, in the examination for their degree, de Rancé got first place and Bossuet third. That seems very odd to us, but such was the fact; it may have been due to influence and family connections; there were a number of other things taken into account besides merit.... The Abbé de Rancé remained friends with Bossuet, who remembered him, and longed for the day when he, too, might go to La Trappe; and he intended to make his retreat for ordination there. He took his advice when asked to preach the funeral oration on the Princess Palatine; he asked de Rancé for his recollections of her when he was about to speak of her before the Court. She had been the penitent of the Abbé de Rancé, who knew her intimately.

Bossuet had a longing for solitude, for rest, for a life in God, and in this he resembled many of his contemporaries. That was how La Trappe was regarded, not only by many Bishops, but by many courtiers. Such, for instance, as the Due d'Antin¹ — the most indefatigable of courtiers — who, when he saw the Chancellor of France, M. de Pont-Chartrain,² withdraw from Court — he was a fine character, just a little bit of a Jansenist, but a thorough Christian — said that he himself would have liked to be able to cut to the quick, to put a reasonable interval between his life as a politician, ever eager for advancement, his life of ambition and petty passions, between such a sort of life and death; and he thought of the Abbé de Rancé and La Trappe. It was, in a way, the aim of all these courtiers, men who felt the vanity of life without having the courage to cut themselves off from it. Now, who was the Abbé de Rancé? What sort of a man was he? That is what I should like to tell you today.

¹. Louis Antoine de Pardillan de Gondrin (1653–1736) was a legitimate son of Madame de Montespan, Lieutenant-General of the armies of the King, 1702; Governor of the Orléanais, 1704; Minister of State; created Duc d'Antin in 1711.

². Philybeaux Pont-Chartrain, Secretary of State during the reign of Louis XIV.

HIS CHILDHOOD: HIS CANONRY AND ABBACY.

He was born in 1626, of a noble family that held a high place in society. His father was related to the family of Mary de Medici, and he was himself in close touch with the Orleans family, especially with Gaston d'Orleans, whose chaplain he became, whom he visited at Chambord, accompanied by Madame de Guise and the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, whom he afterwards received at La Trappe. There is a long correspondence between them and the Abbé de Rancé.

He was a child destined from his earliest years for the Church—that is to say, he was intended to live on the Church's revenues; it is not exactly the same thing, but it was so in his father's eyes. His father was a practical man. In 1626 he was looking around for a godfather to his son—he saw into the future a little—and his eyes fell on a man who seemed to have something in him; this man, later on, was to be known as Cardinal Richelieu, and he was asked if he would kindly act as godfather to the child. Richelieu consented, and gave his godson his own Christian name—Armand.

When quite a child one of his brothers died. The boy was eleven or twelve years of age, and a Canon of Notre Dame. Armand succeeded to the canonry. The cathedral had a certain number of canonries: there were fifty-nine canonries with a total revenue of 180,000 livres—about 3,000 livres apiece. It was much sought after (not the canonry, of course, but the income). Moreover, there were some Canons who were children, not even able to climb up into the stalls, and so they sat on the little round stools of the choir boys. These children, too, had a small prebend, a little less than that of the other Canons; they were bound as Canons to study conscientiously, and go to Holy Communion four times a year, dressed in their canonical robes. De Rancé was one of these little Canons, with an income of 2,000 livres a year; that was his little prebend.

He was also a little Abbé; the father was rather greedy. You know how abbeys were administered in those days; there were a certain number of abbeys bound to have a regular Abbot—I mean a

member of the same order, a religious like the rest of his community; and then there were a number of abbeys to which the King had the right of nomination—this was tolerated by Rome. The King had the power of nominating to these abbeys *in commendam* {in trust}, as they were called, and he nominated members of the secular clergy or even laymen to them. The abbey was administered by a Prior; the persons nominated had the title of Abbot. They received one-third of the income of the abbey, the second portion appertained to the religious, and the balance was intended to defray the general expenses of the house—repairs, and the carrying out of public worship. This system of abbeys *in commendam* was utterly pernicious, as far as regular observance was concerned—Montalembert¹ has shown that—and so the finest abbeys in France were under Abbots who had almost princely dwelling-houses there; but this was just a pose, for they lived at Court, and let matters slide. The monks were governed by a Prior. At their very doors, in the Abbot's house, there were more or less scandalous goings on; everything was going to rack and ruin. The Court, in spite of remonstrances from Rome, insisted on maintaining this system, because it was a means of paying for services rendered, or sometimes for services to be rendered. The abbeys were something like the tobacco shops today, regarded as part of the excise, and very much sought after.

The Abbé de Rancé held a number of abbeys: La Trappe, which brought him in 3,000 livres a year; St Symphorian, which brought him as much; Notre Dame de Val, which brought him more; and a priory at Boulogne, near Tours. The total revenue was from 20,000 to 25,000 livres a year. So now you can see what was the position of the child who, like many others, was intended to live on Church revenues.

¹. Charles Forbes Rêne, Comte de Montalembert, born at London, 1810, died in Paris, 1870, orator and historian. His chief work was *Les Moines de l'Occident*, of which an English translation has been published. His letter to Hyacinthe Loyson, who is referred to in the introduction, endeavouring to persuade him not to leave the Church, has been described by M. Olliver as "one of the most pathetic documents ever written."

I am insisting on this point because it was the beginning of his scruples, the starting-point of the rigorous examination of conscience that he made on the use of these sums of money which he received from the Church. According to Canon Law he was bound, after providing for his own personal expenses in accordance with his state in life, to employ these moneys in almsgiving or ecclesiastical works.

HIS LOVE OF GREEK.

Armand de Rancé had an unusually precocious mind. He had a Professor of Greek, M. de Bellerophon, who bore a predestined name, for there is a Greek proverb that runs, "He speaks Doric like Bellerophon." As a matter of fact, he spoke Greek like French. When he was twelve years of age, in token of gratitude to his godfather for the deep interest he had shown, he dedicated a new edition of Anacreon to him, with notes that are not too bad at all; I read them a long time ago. (I have a weakness for Greek; perhaps my vocation was to be a Hellenist.) It was the work of a child of twelve, and he never despised Greek. Later on, at La Trappe, he made an excellent translation of some very difficult passages from St Basil and St Gregory Nazianzen in order to throw light on passages of his own book on holiness and the religious life. He was doubtful about the meaning of some texts, and he submitted them to a Hellenist, Cotelier, the Professor of Greek at the Royal College, who has left us a magnificent edition of the Apostolic Fathers. Cotelier returned the letter with the remark that it was for him to learn from the Abbé de Rancé.

The seventeenth century had a passion for Greek. There were many persons whom one might have embraced "out of love for Greek," Ménage¹ amongst others. (Certainly no one would have embraced him for any other motive than love of Greek!) President

¹. Gilles Ménage (1613–1692), a French scholar, whose caustic criticisms made many enemies for him. He was satirised by Molière. The character Vadius the pedant in *Les Femmes Savantes* is a portrait of Ménage.

Cousin also! He loved Greek for sixty years of his life. He translated all the authors of the Byzantine age—a hideous task! Huet, the future Bishop of Avranches, began with a learned edition of *Daphnis and Chloe* (the Regent esteemed it highly, but chiefly on account of its illustrations, which were done by Watteau). There was the Greek romance of *Theogenes and Chariclea* in Racine's hands; love of Greek again! The Abbé de Rancé had a passion for Greek. There are people who never have enough books; they are devourers of books. There was a man in the Middle Ages called Peter *Comestor*.¹ You give a book to such a person, and it is finished in two days. These are the people who cry out: "More! more! and still more!" They always want to go farther. Their brains and souls are, as it were, insatiable. "I have finished the book, I have finished the work; it has performed its task, it has said all it has to say! There's nothing left! *Affer! affer!*" {Fetch [another book]!} The Abbé de Rancé was just like that: a real *Comestor*. He was a scholar in very varied branches of knowledge before his examination for the bachelorship in theology, which was in reality a stiff enough test. He had two years to prepare for it—two years! What was he to do during two years? Six months would have been enough for him. What was he to do in the meantime? He was the sort of a man capable of making a great effort, one of those men who cannot follow the ordinary routine, who must, as it were, burn brightly, who cannot go on with lights dimmed.

Even when he was still quite a youth he had a natural literary style—in the grand manner—very strong and clear, indicating a mind of great power. Later on, when he was a Trappist, he wrote to Benserade²—what a distance between the two men!—a letter which almost resulted in his election to the Academy. Just at that moment they were choosing an Academician. There was a meeting at

^{1.} Peter Comestor died in 1178. His chief work was one called *Historia Scholastica*, which enjoyed a great reputation down to the end of the Middle Ages.

^{2.} Isaac de Benserade (1613–1691), Court poet and favourite of Anne of Austria. His literary works were popular in his own day, but he is now chiefly remembered for one sonnet on Job. He spent his last years on a translation of the Psalms.

Chancellor Seguier's.¹ There were very interesting gatherings at the Chancellor's house; remarkable men met there, such as Mézeray² — a perfect bear of a man, always in opposition, always black-balling Court candidates to show how free the Academy was (perhaps he blackballed Bossuet). Well, it was Benserade who read the Abbé de Rancé's letter. They were going to nominate him for his style. It would have made him shiver. He just escaped it! It is clear, then, that he was one of those very learned and cultured minds, not very powerful, perhaps, but the type of mind with very rapid powers of assimilation, and gifted with a vivid imagination.

As he grew up he began to be interested in dress and fashion. He desired only what was most elegant and refined. He wore a costume, ecclesiastical if you like, of velvet and silk ... the sort of dress that can be worn with an air... (Gresset has some verses on the subject which I shall not quote on account of the ladies behind the balustrade). He had a knack of giving an elegant twitch to his collar with a charming hand (worthy of Cardinal de Noailles³ or Cardinal de Rohan⁴ 2), and he had no inclination to conceal it. He would have liked to write in full dress, for he thought it due to himself to be always in perfect trim. The grand manner, in fact, and aristocratic to his finger-tips. If M. Olier had seen him moving along with his friends he would have

¹ Pierre Seguier (1588–1672), Chancellor of France in 1635. He was a great patron of learning and literature. After the death of Richelieu the meetings of the French Academy took place at his house until 1672, the date of his death.

² François Eudes de Mézeray (1610–1683), historian, member and permanent secretary of the French Academy, was a brother of St John Eudes, “the apostle and doctor of devotion to the Sacred Heart.”

³ Louis Antoine de Noailles (1651–1729), Archbishop of Paris, was created Cardinal in 1699, but was afterwards removed from his see on account of his Gallican tendencies. He was sympathetic to Jansenism in its second phase.

⁴ Louis René Edouard de Rohan (1734–1803) was notorious in the early period of his career for his luxury and dissipation. He was Archbishop of Strasbourg, and is chiefly remembered for his part in the historical mystery known as “The Diamond Necklace.” He went into exile during the Revolution, and was morally improved by his misfortunes. He spent the remains of his wealth on the poor and resigned his archbishopric.

been saddened at the sight. One of these friends was the Abbé de Harlay de Champvallon,¹ who, later on, in no wise resembled him; they were about the same age. Harlay de Champvallon, to his misfortune, became Archbishop of Paris after having been a friend of the Abbé de Rancé's! There is a great gulf fixed between them, one on the right and the other on the left; we shall meet them later on when we come to the question of the four articles.

Along with dress and fashion went a splendid retinue of attendants. The first luxury he indulged in was horses; he could never find horses swift enough. He wanted to reach the end of his journey before he started. The railway, our express train, would certainly not have been fast enough for him; lively in the extreme, insatiable, devouring space in thought, such was his character. Later on he had a passion for hunting. His health was very delicate—he was one of those delicate people who go far; he was made of steel; slight, but with the slightness of steel—one of those supple things that seem quite negligible. Look at a cat's paw, it is just nothing; and then look at an angry cat; how she arches her back! The paw grows rigid, and the claws get surprisingly strong. You are amazed that the sleek little thing you have been fondling a moment ago has grown so tense, with nerves like steel. Well, now, that was the sort of health the Abbé de Rancé had. He set out in the middle of the night for a hunt, and he kept hunting, and when there was good sport and plenty of game he spent half the week hunting. At times he could be very hard on himself, and he was not afraid to go to any lengths. One day his friend de Harlay, and some others, were standing near a lighted candle. "I bet you," said he to them, "you won't put your finger in the candle flame." The Abbé de Harlay tried, and at once pulled back, and so did the others, but de Rancé kept his finger in the flame. He was just like the Spartan boy devoured by the fox; his face contracted

¹. François de Harlay de Champvallon (1625–1695) succeeded his uncle in the archbishopric of Rouen in 1651, and was transferred to the see of Paris in 1671. He was denounced by Bossuet for truckling to the Court "like a valet." Madame de Sévigné made a bitter comment on the difficulty of preaching a funeral sermon on him for two reasons—his life and his death.

with the violence of the pain, but as he had said he would do it, he still kept his finger in the flame; that was the Abbé de Rancé precisely.

He wanted to see the whole world. One day he and his friends were together, and they felt bored — perhaps the snow prevented them from getting out; they asked each other what was to be done. “Let each of us put down a thousand pistoles — that will make 30,000 livres — then we can set out on our adventures and have a good time as long as the money lasts.” That was the idea of a young man quite unlike the young men of today. The devil appeared to St Bridget, and she asked him: “What is your name?” “Coldness itself.” Young people today might say: “I am coldness itself”; there is no way of warming them up. One might think at first that they were Fausts — Faust, the young man curious about everything, full of life and passion; Faust, if you like, the friend of Marguerite. Not at all. The young man of today is Mephistopheles, with an empty sarcastic smile, interested in nothing, and seeing the absolute futility of everything. There is not much hope for young people such as that. They are the very antithesis of the type of young man like the Abbé de Rancé.

He had a very keen sense of honour; he could not understand how a man could fail to keep his word even after a lapse of ten or twenty years. It shocked him; it was something absolutely beyond him. Monsignor de Harlay gave him such a shock. When a man goes into politics he is strangled by them, to quote Madame de Sévigné — that is to say, he does not say what he thinks. Harlay was in politics up to the neck. And so he went back on the Abbé de Rancé; he had forgotten. De Rancé wrote him a magnificent letter: he could not understand how a man could forget certain promises, certain statements; he couldn’t see it; he could not persuade himself that one man had betrayed another, and the fact that such was the case remained one of the stumbling-blocks of his life. The Assembly of the Clergy had supplied him with the spectacle of men who broke their words, out of obedience either to the Court, or the people, and he never ceased to be shocked at it; it was a revelation of life he could

never get over, an insoluble problem, more insoluble than any theological one.

He was, besides, inclined to take the weaker side. We have a proof of this in the meeting of the Sorbonne at which Arnauld was condemned. Pascal gives an account of it in the *Provinciales*. Arnauld maintained an untenable doctrine but there was a certain amount of passion, an exuberance of severity involved in his condemnation; precautions had been taken to see that he would be condemned. The whole thing looked as if pressure had been brought to bear on the Sorbonne; it looked like cowardice, and the Abbé de Rancé was disgusted at it. He was not a Jansenist, as, later on, he told the young Saint-Simon,¹ who admired him so highly and entrusted him with his memoirs. (Can you imagine Saint-Simon's memoirs on the library shelves at La Trappe, from which the Abbé de Rancé wished to exclude everything contrary to charity? And Saint-Simon's memoirs were there! I love to think that the Abbé de Rancé never suspected their contents.) He put Saint-Simon on his guard against the Jansenists. As he had been brought into close contact with them he was able to recognise their schismatical and party spirit. He was seduced by their virtue, but he was a hundred leagues away from dogmatic Jansenism. In spite of all this, the semblance of pressure to bring about Arnauld's condemnation disgusted him, and he voted against his expulsion from the Sorbonne.

And when Cardinal de Retz was persecuted and put in prison, when to save himself from disgrace at Commercy he had taken refuge in the towers of Notre Dame (it was rather high up!), the Abbé de Rancé remained one of his most faithful friends. It was enough that the Cardinal was persecuted, and in bad luck, for him to devote himself entirely to his service, and show a certain amount of chivalry by doing so. There was something of the cavalier in the Trappist—

¹ Louis de Rouvroy, Duc de Saint-Simon (1675–1755), is “an almost unique example of a man who has acquired great literary fame entirely by posthumous publication,” according to Professor Saintsbury, who also says that he had “an extraordinary genius for historical narrative and character-drawing of a certain sort.”

he was God's avenger on himself—there was something enthusiastic about him, a generous inclination to defend the weak because they are weak, to take sides, with the object of backing the party that is threatened, and seems to be the weaker.

I should have liked, by means of these touches, to paint a portrait of the Abbé de Rancé for you; it is always difficult to paint a man's portrait. I have told you what sort of character he was—a devourer—and the nature of his soul: *Affer! affer!* Always, always out for whatever was over the hills and far away! *Insatiability*. Natures such as that are very much exposed to curiosity; they want to see everything, to know everything, to find out everything for themselves. They will not believe anybody's word; they want to have the experience themselves—and sometimes they are very sorry for it afterwards.

So he obtained his bachelorship of theology, very brilliantly—he was at the top of the list; and then he obtained his doctorship in the Sorbonne. There was a discussion between the Sorbonne and the Canons of Notre Dame. (There is nothing to beat a corporate body, especially an ecclesiastical one, for having the funniest sort of disputes.) The Canons wanted de Rancé to wear his canonical robes; he all but lost his doctorate. In the end he elected for the Sorbonne, and was received into it.

He wanted to be a preacher. La Bruyère says that preaching brings all sorts of benefices far more quickly than holiness or the pastoral ministry. La Bruyère says some biting things; he lived in the society of the Duke, and the great Condé, and he knew all about certain petitions for bishoprics which some preachers had a hand in. All this may be found in seventeenth-century memoirs. It is not always a good thing to be in the position of the great Condé or of Madame de Maintenon,¹ because it may end up in temptations against the faith.

¹ Françoise d'Aubigny, Marquise de Maintenon (1635–1719), was married first to Scarron in 1651, and after having acted as governess to Louis XIV's children by Madame de Montespan was privately married to Louis in the winter of 1685–86 by de Harlay. She was the foundress of a school for girls at St Cyr, where Racine's

... At any rate, preaching was one of the ways of arriving. There are so many people who think only of how they preach; they love an imposing presence, just like the Abbé de Rancé, beautiful hands stretched out from the pulpit, magnificent gestures, plenty of feeling, plenty of spirit, everything pushed to extremes, rightly or wrongly. De Rancé dreamed of becoming an orator: "Preach! Preach!" What is preaching? He learned afterwards. He preached on two or three occasions, but was not, perhaps, a great success; later on, he judged these efforts of his very severely.

There are some disappointments that have far more influence on life than is greatly admitted; such, for instance, was his disappointment at the General Assembly of the Clergy. He could not stand Mazarin at all. He would have liked Richelieu—all or nothing, hit or miss. Mazarin managed him; one day he was put down in the depths, and the next shot up to the skies. The Abbé de Rancé could not tolerate that; he did not understand shuffling and shiftiness. He was very much hurt by Mazarin's conduct at the Assembly of the Clergy.

But it is hard to live a useless and rather soft sort of life for any length of time without going too far (especially so in the case of a de Rancé), without having experiences where the heart, where the whole self is involved. The Abbé de Rancé found that out.

MADAME DE MONTBAZON.

He was a most attractive man; this may be seen from the effect he produced on his man-servant, Anthony. Anthony would have allowed himself to be hacked to pieces for the Abbé de Rancé; he admired him, looked on him as a demi-god. He adored the Abbé's kindness, which received all its value from the dignity, the distinction, the "grand manner" with which it was conferred. When de Rancé unbent, and spoke to Anthony kindly, graciously, gently, and familiarly, Anthony was in the seventh heaven. He followed him everywhere; he

plays *Esther* and *Athalie* were first produced.

would have followed him to hell; he followed him to La Trappe, for which he had no vocation. (It was very like hell for Anthony.) Now characters such as that are capable of inspiring deep affection. Did de Rancé inspire such affection? I might go into details, but I do not care for meddling with matters of that sort. Did he inspire a great affection in Madame de Montbazon? She was older than he was, but forty-two years is no age for a woman like Madame de Montbazon. Euripides says that the beauty of autumn has a loveliness of its own. Her autumn was a “season of mellow fruitfulness” {Keats, “To Autumn”} Was her heart interested in de Rancé?... She delighted in making herself attractive, even if it were merely out of sheer fondness for coquetry. This is the crisis of Abbé de Rancé’s life-story. There are souls who see in one fall, all falls; in one death, all deaths; who, losing one thing, lose all that can be lost, and by one disillusion are disillusioned for ever. They put their whole life into one affection, and when that fails, all is lost; they fall into an abyss, and if they are not sustained by the hand of God, they fall into a bottomless abyss. Madame de Montbazon died suddenly. Is it true that the Abbé de Rancé (who had a magnificent country house close to Madame de Montbazon’s) — is it true that he went one day to this house, entered her room, and found her with her head cut off, because she was too tall for the coffin? Is that true?... It is said that, from that moment, he suffered from hallucinations, that he saw her in lakes of fire, and had that severed head always before his eyes. I do not believe a single word of it. It was not after an imaginative experience like that that he threw himself into La Trappe as if into a hole. No, six years passed between the death of Madame de Montbazon and his retirement to La Trappe. Six years settles a great deal; how few there are who remember at the end of six years! When one is struck down, the natural inclination is to seek for consolation and forgetfulness. There was a Queen at the end of the century — I shall not mention her name — who met with great trouble; she drank to forget it; she drank forgetfulness! That is one form of consolation: the consolation of the flesh. If the heart’s desires cannot be gratified, there is a sort of consolation in making a division between the senses and the affections, in seeking the pleasures of sense if the heart cannot be

won. Forgetfulness is sought for, and, in the end, sorrow is forgotten by drawing a veil over it. But this was not the case with the Abbé de Rancé; he had been stricken, and in his own misfortune he had a sort of vision of universal unhappiness. It was a blow that upset the balance of the soul, tipping it over on the side of eternity.

And, in addition, he had had experience of the greatness of man. Man sees the present, and, in the vision of it, remembers the past and foresees the future. Man is, indeed, a poor creature, but, at any rate, he has within him a sort of image of the eternity of God, an image of the Trinity. He lives in the past by memory; he lives in the present; and he even lives a little in the future, for the human mind may pierce into the future, and see a little beyond the present. But man's misery is ever made manifest to him by his memory of the past. Everything is crumbling, and vanishing, as he realises confusedly, and what is forgetfulness but death?... So much, so very much is lost in forgetfulness! We cannot even recall our own past. Hence the memory of the past, which is a proof of the greatness of man, the image of God to whom all the past is present, helps him to realise the nothingness of the creature. So, too, his visions of the future, which are but so much conjecture, and in which there is so much that is purely contingent.

A man who has received a blow like de Rancé's survives, as we say; but he does not exactly survive — there is something dead in him; he vegetates; the best part of his life is gone. He is like a tree stripped of its fairest branches; the bare trunk, leafless and fruitless, is still living, but no longer with a full, complete life. And that is how the Abbé de Rancé felt.

But what was he to do? He had received a Christian education. Read his admirable letter to Madame de Lafayette.¹ Madame de

¹ Marie Madeline Pioche de la Vergne, Comtesse de Lafayette (1634–1692), is chiefly remarkable for her novel the *Princesse de Clèves*, the starting-point of the modern psychological novel, which was published in 1678. Other novels by her were *La Princesse de Montpensier* (1662), *Zayde* (1670), and the *Comtesse de Tende*. She had been an intimate friend of Henrietta of England, and wrote a Life of her,

Lafayette, so refined, so sceptical, was afraid of giving too much to God; she mistrusted him. If I give myself, what will God give me? If I give, and go on giving, I am leaving something in order to obey you, but what have I if you have deceived me? "If you have deceived me," said the poet, "give me back my life." That is exactly Madame de Lafayette's style. A breath of Voltaire had passed over her. She wrote to the Abbé de Rancé. I would give all the novels of today (it would not be much of a sacrifice) for a letter from Madame de Lafayette to the Abbé de Rancé. She asked him: "How were you converted?" The sight of his conversion and of all these Trappists, caused the utmost astonishment at Court. A man cannot become a great saint, rise above human things without arousing curiosity and sympathy. Literary men will say: "This is a phenomenon." Sainte-Beuve would say: "Let us study it." It is so curious, so rare, the sort of thing that really should be analysed. An article bound to excite interest and curiosity could be got out of the Trappists; it would do for an article in the Figaro; it is a new vein which can be worked when the others are played out.

In the seventeenth century curiosity was of a different kind; they wanted to understand life. There are accounts written by the Abbé de Rancé of his religious brethren; he wrote six little volumes—I have one here, but I shall not have time to read any of it—on the deaths of some of them; they are a supplement to the lives of the Fathers of the desert.

There was one of them, a Dom Muce, who had been a scoundrel, a ruffian who had first been a grenadier (the whole seventeenth century is summed up in that), and then became a monk—and, what is worse, a scandalous monk, and he died a penitent. When the account of it reached the Court, Madame de Maintenon wept over it; it must have been very touching! Louis XIV asked her, "What are you reading?" and he also read it. So did Mancini, the beautiful Hortense, Mazarin's niece, an odd woman; it gave her a fit of melancholy

Histoire de Madame Henriette d'Angleterre, which first appeared in 1720.

that upset Saint-Evremond,¹ that queer fish, who was always hanging about her, carrying her little dog, and besieging a fortress that had surrendered long ago. (It is the silliest occupation that can be imagined for any intelligent man.) He said to her: "How can you let your mind be bothered by all these accounts of La Trappe?" In the seventeenth century La Trappe made such an impression. (But I am getting away from the point; I am starting hares at every turn. I must stop—but I am not sure if I shall be able to do so.) The Abbé de Rancé, then, in his reply to Madame de Lafayette, told in the simplest way how he had returned to God. He said he was disgusted with everything. And it was God who had recalled him. The whole gist of the letter may be summed up in this idea of Bossuet's, inspired by the Abbé de Rancé—it may be found in his funeral sermon on Anne de Gonzague² (it is the most religious, I do not say the most Christian—they are all Christian—but the most religious of all his funeral sermons). What was lacking in the Princess Palatine? What was wanting in this generous woman, who never failed a friend, and yet failed God? What did she feel the need of, in the midst of all her good fortune? God! The God whom she had known.... Well, that's the substance of the Abbé de Rancé's letter to Madame de Lafayette, who wanted to know from himself how he had gone back to God. He had gone because everything disgusted him, because he needed God whom he had known, whom he had felt the need of loving. That was the root of de Rancé's conversion.

¹. Charles de Marguetel de St Denis, Seigneur de Saint-Evremond (1610–1703), owing to political intrigues, had to fly to England, where he was favourably received by Charles II. Hortense Mancini came to England in 1670, and they set up a salon for gambling and literary discussion. Saint-Evremond is buried in Westminster Abbey.

². Anne de Gonzague, Princess Palatine, was the daughter of the Duc de Nevers and Rethel, and Marie de Lorraine. She was born in 1616, and married in 1645 Edward, son of Frederick V, Duke of Bavaria. One of her daughters married the "Great Condé." She took a prominent part in the Fronde. She led a scandalous life at Court, but was converted when she was fifty-six years old. She died at the Luxembourg Palace in 1684, and the funeral sermon was preached at the monastery of Val de Grace.

And then, he was very uncertain as to what he should do. He saw a great deal of pious people and, as he tells us somewhere, he did not like them. I can quite understand it; there are persons living in the world who are regarded as devout, but their type of piety would annoy a man who feels the need of conversion, the sort of man who does not want to take half measures, but who feels called on to attempt something high, something great and complete. Take a harsh woman like Madame de Maintenon face to face with Mademoiselle de Vallière, saying to her: "There you are, resplendent in gold brocade; how are you going to put on the Carmelite serge?" When we see such a person as that we say: "No, that's not real piety." If you met a young man in the company of the Abbé de Rancé (I am imagining a little ecclesiastic, a little correct cleric, going along in his humdrum way, very simple, very good) you would say, "There's a saint," and you would say of the Abbé de Rancé: "There's a devil." Well, God does not judge that way; even a man who is the least little bit clear-sighted would not form such a judgement. When the Abbé de Rancé met that kind of pious person in the world he said: "They don't appeal to me." He was the sort of man who, on entering a room, never fails to see the hidden cobweb. In the moral order he could not see a man without noticing the chink in his armour, and then falling on it. Such a disposition of mind is not contrary to charity, but it is not a fortunate sort of disposition to possess. Such people see only the emptiness, the contrarities, and the imperfections of life. Let such a man go on, living for himself and his own self-satisfaction, and he will end up like the Marquis de la Fare, the model of the perfect egoist; life, in the end, will be a constant torture to such a man, a series of events that have all turned out badly, stones he has met on the wayside. If he wished to have an avenue on which to walk, a perfectly smooth avenue, and he chanced to find a pebble on it, he would write down in his memoirs: "Today I found a pebble under my feet." That is the only thing such men notice, and the story of their lives is made up of all the opposition they have met with, and all the little things they have come up against; their whole life is made up of things like that. And that is

what La Fare came to; he is an illustration of the text: "If a man will save his life let him lose it." From the spiritual point of view Abbé de Rancé might have come to that.

So, as he saw nothing to suit him, he turned to Port Royal. There were great characters at Port-Royal, and M. d'Andilly¹ appealed to de Rancé: he had plenty of style and elegance; he was a gentleman, and also a translator of the Fathers of the desert; there was something lofty, yet not repellent, about him — certainly nothing repellent. So the Abbé de Rancé went to have a chat with him, and Port Royal struck him as very harsh and domineering. So he told Saint-Simon. His conscience was troubled about the benefices he held, but did not personally administer. He consulted Port Royal. "They should be sanctified by being used well. If you gave this or that to one of ours who has had to fly to Holland...?" De Rancé was disgusted at that; it was the weak side of Jansenism. The Abbé Legendre relates that he had an uncle (all the good the relationship ever did the uncle was to have nephews who abused him). This uncle had a library in which all books written by Jesuits were ticketed "dreadful books," "abominable books" — it was a kind of Inferno; alongside them were the Jansenist books. And Legendre adds: "He was not much of a Jansenist, because he believed in comfort; but he would have been obliged to forego his expectations, and his lady penitents would have abandoned him, if he had not professed to be a Jansenist." (Only a Canon could have discovered that!)

The Abbé de Rancé also went to the Oratory. They all advised him to lead a good life, the life of a good ecclesiastic living in the world, distributing his goods amongst the poor, and living quietly. "You

¹. Robert Arnauld d'Andilly (1589–1674) was the eldest of the Arnauld family, who took such a prominent part in the early stages of the Jansenist movement. He became friends with Saint-Cyran in 1621, and, owing to his influence with Anne of Austria, secured his friend's release from Vincennes after Richelieu's death. He converted Anne de Rohan, Princesse de Guéménée, already referred to, and acted as her lay director. On the death of his wife he retired to Port Royal and translated, amongst other works, the *Confessions* of St Augustine, the works of St Teresa, and the *Scala Paradisi* of St John Climachus.

shall not live in Paris, but at Veretz. You may have a magnificent park, books, and lead a quiet life, refined, but not grossly epicurean. And then distribute your surplus wealth." The Abbé de Rancé went off to the beautiful shady groves of Veretz, like a man struck by a thunderbolt, sick of life. He asked his friends to come and stay with him, and they did so. He led a penitent life, rather austere, and it seemed very austere to those who were with him. One day, one of his old friends, the Bishop of Comminges (he was one of the des Choiseul {a noble family from Champagne), said to him: "You are uneasy." ... There was still something in the Abbé de Rancé's soul that he had not got rid of, something that made him sicker than any illness. So the Bishop said to him: "See Pavillon,¹ the Bishop of Aleth; he is a saint. He used to be a companion of M. Olier's. Go to him." De Rancé set out with the Bishop of Comminges, who was himself a very holy man. He saw Pavillon, and had a conversation with him. Pavillon received him kindly, and showed him how a Bishop lived in the Pyrenees in the seventeenth century. He took him along one day—the Abbé de Rancé was a priest at the time—and said to him: "We are going to make a little journey together." He gave him a morsel of black bread and a little wine and water in a gourd. Pavillon was about to visit his scattered sheep in the mountains; his episcopal city was only a village. "It was the sort of a life calculated to turn away a man's ambition to be a Bishop," remarked the Bishop of Comminges. Pavillon said to De Rancé: "You must do something for God's sake: you have a great family inheritance; give it to the poor." The Abbé de Rancé listened to him, and replied: "I will do so; I will do it, relying on obedience, and confident that obedience

¹. Nicolas Pavillon, Bishop of Aleth, was born at Paris in 1597, and as a young priest placed himself under the spiritual guidance of St Vincent, who employed him in giving missions and directing the Ladies of Charity. There seems to be a slight mistake, therefore, in the text, where he is referred to as a companion of M. Olier's. He was nominated Bishop of Aleth in 1637, and only accepted it at the recommendation of the saint. He was consecrated Bishop at St Lazare, and left for his diocese accompanied by one of St Vincent's best priests, F. Eugene Blatiron. He was friendly to Jansenist ideas, and refused to sign the formulary, though begged by St Vincent to do so. He died on December 8, 1677.

will give me strength to do it.” That was one of the Abbé de Rancé’s principles of spiritual guidance. As a director of souls he was extremely rigid, but, when he gave advice, he knew that God would give help. This is for many persons the best sort of direction; to be any use to them one must be firm. And that is how Pavilion acted. He added: “I cannot direct you, but there is a Bishop at Pamiers, a saint, a companion of M. Vincent’s.” This was M. Collet,¹ who later on became famous in the affair of the *Régale*;² these two men were saints, but headstrong saints, as Bussy-Rabutin called Innocent XI (I am very fond of the *non possumus* {we cannot} attitude when there is something at stake). Pavilion was a bit of a Jansenist. So the Abbé de Rancé went to see Collet, who said to him: “You have too many benefices on your conscience; you must resign some of them. Keep only one, administer that one yourself, and see that it is properly administered.” “That’s quite true,” said de Rancé (the advice coincided with the secret remorse he experienced). “I will keep only one and see that it is properly administered.”

He had the greatest difficulty in the world in resigning his other benefices, because the Court wanted to appoint its own nominees, and the Abbé de Rancé wished to appoint religious capable of administering the benefices worthily. In the end, there he was, with-

¹. François Etienne de Caulet, Abbé de St Volusien de Foix, Bishop of Pamiers (1610–1680). The Abbé Huvelin would seem to have transposed the rôles of Pavilion and Caulet, for it was the latter who was a friend and disciple of M. Olier’s. Together with M. du Ferrier and M. Caulet, M. Olier established the Sulpicians at Vaugirard. However, it was through the influence of St Vincent that M. Caulet was nominated Bishop of Pamiers and consecrated on March 5, 1638. For a long time he combated Jansenism, but through the influence of Pavilion was gained over to the Jansenist side. He refused, though requested to do so by St Vincent, to sign the collective letter of the French episcopate against Jansenism.

². *Droit de Régale* was the claim made by a sovereign or temporal ruler to seize the revenues of vacant sees or imperial abbeys. In France there were certain ecclesiastical provinces entirely exempt from it. On February 10, 1673, the King issued a declaration claiming this right all over France. Most of the Bishops yielded without serious protest, but both Pavilion and Caulet resisted, and appealed in 1677 to Innocent XI, who, in a brief, begged Louis not to extend the claim to exempt sees.

out fortune or benefices! He went back to Comminges, and the Bishop said to him: "There is something else to be done: it is not enough for you to resign your ecclesiastical benefices; you must make a gift of yourself, you must be a monk." De Rancé jumped up. "Be a monk? Never!" Such were his ideas five years after Madame de Montbazon's death; never would he be a monk! Well, that was his first impulse.

He had a horror of lax monks who lived, even ever so little, outside their convent walls. There were monks in Paris who were always outside their monasteries; as you went down the Rue de la Harpe you might have met a monk of St Victor, lingering at every book-shop. He was about de Rancé's age. St Victor's was a slightly relaxed monastery, but, at the same time, it had a good Prior — Fr. Gondar. There was a monk of St Victor's, a real poet, who had the pleasure of reading his own inscriptions in verse on every fountain and public monument. The city of Paris paid him 500 livres a year for his exquisite inscriptions. "That was enough to supply him with the best of wine," said the Abbé de Legendre, who himself had no love for poor wine. (It's another of the Canon's reflections.) Now the monk who composed poetry was Santeuil;¹ his verse was airy, light-winged, and scintillating. It did not appeal to the Abbé de Rancé at all. That was not his idea of a monk. When Santeuil passed the Jesuit's house in the Rue St Jacques on his way to his own publisher, Cramoisy, he got excited. He would have challenged them to a fight, or rather a combat in hexameters, pentameters, and the Adonaic stanza; it would have been no use for Fr. Commire to come out with his own verses, beautifully arranged and in battle order. Santeuil had a genius for Latin verse, the sort of genius that inspires a good deal of fear, the genius that hits out in all directions. Later on he was to

¹. Jean Baptiste de Santeuil (1630–1697). His hymns are to be found in the work *Hymni sacri et novi*, published in 1689. They were inserted in the Cluniac and Paris breviaries. Several of them have been translated into English by Father Caswall and others. For instance, the hymn mentioned in the text *Felices nemorum pangimus incolas* begins in Caswall's version "Sing we of those who in the forest wild."

hymn La Trappe and the Abbé de Rancé; he wrote a magnificent hymn, a real masterpiece in Latin verse (as far as Latin verses can be masterpieces); he was on the mountain-top crying out: "Go on, work away, and I will sing your praise." That is exactly the rôle of a critic. Sainte-Beuve said: "Go on, suffer away, and I will analyse you, I will dissect you to the innermost fibre." Santeuil wrote:

"Felices nemorum pangimus incolas."

And then a magnificent stanza:

*"Illis summa fuit gloria, despici;
Illis divitiae, pauperiem pati;
Illis summa voluptas
Longo supplicio mori."**

That's really exquisite!

The Abbé de Rancé was very fond of all Santeuil's hymns, but he was afraid lest the poet might suffer from vanity. There is a danger in not being able to walk down the street without seeing your verses on a fountain, or of going into a church without hearing your own hymns. The Abbé de Rancé said: "Santeuil's hymns are more beautiful than the old ones, but, all the same, there is something in the old ones that inspires reverence."

That's quite true. And when, instead of these hymns, the Roman liturgy was substituted, the principle was consecrated; the ancient liturgies have something holier about them, something that inspires greater reverence. The mind dwells more complacently on the modern ones. But they did not disarm the Abbé de Rancé's hostility against monks who travelled about a little bit too much. That was not his idea of a monk. Santeuil and the Abbey of St Victor had never been his ideal, nor even the Abbey of St Germain-des-Près, or St

* As translated by Caswall, *Hymns & Poems, Original & Translated* (Burns and Oates, 1908) the verse reads:

'Their highest glory was to be despised!
To suffer want, their gain!
The happiness which they supremely prized
To die by lengthen'd pain!'

Denis. These monks went on journeys; they had to go to the farthest parts of Italy, even as far as Monte Cassino, visiting all the libraries on the way, stopping at the Ambrosian library at Milan—that meant a great deal of travel, The Abbé de Rancé would have said, “A rolling stone gathers no moss,” if the proverb had been invented in his day.

So he went to La Trappe, built on a hillside, four leagues from Laigle, two and a half leagues from Mortagne.

It was one of his own abbeys, and he had visited it previously to see about having the buildings repaired. He had met some of the monks on that occasion, and his attitude was: “Let them do as they please; it’s no affair of mine!” He may have had some hunting there, perhaps, some good sport.... He came this time to bring them back to a mode of life in accordance with the rule of St Bernard—that is to say, the most austere rule, the hardest and most mortifying to human nature. The monks no longer wore the habit, or observed the rule. St Bernard said: “Rise at midnight on feast days, and at two o’clock on ordinary days, in order to chant matins; you shall pause before each verse of the psalm—you shall pause for the length of an *ave*—and so matins will last for two or three hours. Afterwards you shall work with your hands; few books, no study, no curiosity, a life of perpetual fasting and silence.”

All this, it is true, was no longer observed at Citeaux; it was said that custom had prevailed against it, and that custom can prevail against a law. The men of the primitive observance were represented as giants: “*Grandiaque effossis mirabitur ossa sepulchris.*” {“Bones as of giants from the trench untombed”; Virgil, *Georgics* 1.497, trans. Greenough, 1900}

“We are not made of the same stuff, we have fallen into a sort of lethargic state as contrasted with the vigour of the olden days,” said the monks of Citeaux. But the Abbé de Rancé would have none of it. “*The rule will be carried out whole and entire,*” said he, “*or not at all.*”

He set about reforming the monks; experience shows there is nothing so difficult as reforming monks. He was very nearly being poisoned, just like St Benedict in former days, but he overcame every

difficulty by his gentleness, his inflexible will, and his prompt sacrifices. He had to do it, let the others follow him or not; he had only five or six monks with him, but he would found La Trappe. He devoted all his energies and all his care to the task, rising every night to chant matins, working with his hands at the draining of the marshes and pools surrounding La Trappe. It was the hardest and most austere kind of life, carried out according to the rule of St Bernard in its minutest detail. When a man acts in this wise, relying on God, and on the inspirations he gives certain souls, he may not have many followers. He acts rather like the soldiers of Gideon who did not stoop to drink from the waters of the torrent. Out of five thousand there remained only three hundred, but something was done by that little band. Our Lord had not many Apostles.

The Abbé de Rancé established his community, not by making the rule of St Benedict and St Bernard still more severe, but by moderating it. There are Trappists today who follow St Bernard's rule without the modifications introduced by the Abbé de Rancé, so that La Trappe, in those days, was relatively mild as compared with what it is at the present day, when it is in a most flourishing state.

Every Trappist monastery (they are all large religious farms where everyone works) has at least eighty religious. The Abbey of Aiguebelle has two hundred and fifty; Staoüeli, in Africa, has a very large number of monks, though the poet says that no one is such a fool as to become a Trappist. But there are such fools, and there are many foolish men who become Trappist monks, and foolish women who become Trappist nuns. There are no convents with so many members as the Trappist nuns, with their absolute enclosure, manual labour, and perpetual silence—the hardest sort of life that can be imagined. Near Aiguebelle is Maubec, with its hundred and fifty nuns. So, happily then, there are still people foolish enough to become Trappist monks and nuns. Abbé de Rancé's idea was: it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. When something very high and unattainable is put before human nature, it feels urged to strive for it by a sort of divine impulse that God grants the soul, which says: "I could not descend lower; I will go higher." That is

really true to life. "I could not do the smaller thing; I will do the greater."

A number of men who had vocations came to him; once it was a scamp named Dom Muce, who had been a grenadier and then a monk, and who, by repeated sacrileges, had ended up by hating God.

There are men who come to that. I have met such men — not one, but several — who told me that, by repeated offences, a desire is excited to be able to hurl insults at God; they suffer from not being able to sin enough to hurt him, his own very self in person. After having been plunged in all sorts of sins and ignominies, they suffer from not being able to imagine anything further that might constitute a new sort of sin against God. There are such souls; I have seen them, and touched them with my own hands.

Now Dom Muce was such a man, and he became like a lamb; despair gave place to hope and serenity. And that is what became of Dom Muce.

Again, consider the Count de Santéna. A monk was being buried on the day he came to La Trappe; the monk, Brother Palémon, had been a soldier and a nobleman like himself. "I will take his place," said he, "and I, too, shall be called Palémon." And so he entered La Trappe.

There was another man — he was the Lipton of those days (*laughter*) — a grocer, a very decent grocer, who lived near the Church of St Eustache, and by honest trading had made eleven hundred thousand livres. That is perfectly legitimate; there was no bad smell from those eleven hundred thousand livres.... I do not understand the laughter. He had worked with his wife at establishing the business, and when he had made his fortune his wife died. He was completely upset. He had said to himself: "I shall enjoy my good fortune with her who shared my troubles, my affections, and my life." When he saw himself at the height of his good fortune, she, whom he would have loved to share it with, was not there, and so he fell into despair. To have no one to share our good fortune, to be unhappy, with all the elements of happiness at hand, is worse than

sheer wretchedness. It is just like the King in the story sitting down to a table with gold, and nothing but gold, on it; the irony of it is bitter, and enough to give one a horror of fortune, and that is what happened to the grocer who came to La Trappe. The morrow of a great disappointment is a time of excessive danger for the soul; God alone knows how it will console itself! A sort of irritation is provoked by suffering; there is a kind of perpetual ebb and flow in the tides of passion. The grief that then tempts a man easily turns to something worse, and may glide into all sorts of excesses. This poor man suffered from a persistent mania — suicide. How was he to be cured? He went to La Trappe, where sorrow is sanctified. He saw God, he became a saint, and he died blessing, instead of cursing, God.

In this way crimes were expiated, and sufferings consoled. And thus men were brought to La Trappe.

This is the place for a little controversy, for an attack on the Abbé de Rancé. "What is the good of your monastery at all? It's not practical!"

At La Trappe we beat our breasts. Calvary and the Cross are there, and that in itself is beautiful! We go to the chapel and hear the voices; there is no organ, but only the human voice, uttering itself in a chant filled with tears, a chant that comes from the heart. The *Salve Regina* in the evening, after compline, is one of the loveliest things in this life. We leave La Trappe and are very much moved during the first league of our journey home, and we say: "It's true. What am I doing at all? What is to be the end of all my efforts? What am I spending my time on?" We see the vanity of all things, we enter into ourselves, and the "crumbling pageant" of life passes before our eyes.

Then, when we go on another league, we begin to console ourselves, and say: "But, all the same, God does not ask that; it's all very fine for people who have committed awful crimes." Once, when I was a student at the *École Normale*, I was walking after a Capuchin, who was going down the Faubourg St Jacques, and there was a woman behind him who said: "Why does he act like that?" The same

idea is at the back of most of our minds. "It's all very fine, but, as a matter of fact, the good God doesn't require that from everybody." It's quite true, but God does ask more from us than we give him. The end of human life is to gain eternity; that is its primary end, but there are different means of attaining it, and man, placed upon this earth, is bound to cultivate it, and make knowledge bear fruit. God's ideal would not be realised if there were only Trappists. That's evident. The intellectual development of man, the natural curiosity that leads to the pursuit of knowledge, even to the knowledge of political philosophy which seeks for the best of all forms of government, are all perfectly legitimate; each has its own lawful claim. Hence, everybody is not meant to be a Trappist. That's quite true, but the Trappist monk reminds us, by hitting the nail on the head (and it's a hard blow), that we are on this earth for eternity. That is the great forgotten idea: *Quid hoc ad aeternitatem* {What is this to eternity}? and we are recalled to it by the sort of exaggeration visible in La Trappe.

The Abbé de Rancé, in his book on the holiness of monastic orders, takes the point of view of the hermits, St Anthony, St Pachomius, St Basil, St Gregory Nazianzen; the standpoint of St Jerome striking his breast with a piece of rock — and not putting it down when he strikes other people's breasts. Jerome, discussing a scriptural point with St Augustine, says: "Who is this little Numidian ant that dares to stand up against such a lion as me? Beware, lest I raise my paw and crush you!" St Augustine, a Numidian ant! The Abbé de Rancé had a rather harsh style like that. He became a man of steel, and he did not remain in the desert for nothing. He attacked the Maurist Benedictines, and the travels undertaken by Benedictine scholars. There was Dom Montfauçon,¹ taking a stroll through the

¹. Bernard de Montfauçon (1655–1741) was instructed in his youth by Nicolas Pavillon. Later on he joined the army and fought under Turenne. He became a Benedictine and was professed in 1673. He was transferred to the Abbey of St Germain des Près, and took part in the work of editing the Greek Fathers then in course of publication. He is regarded as the father of Greek paleography, and if not the founder of archæology, at least one of the first to show the advantages to be derived from it. *L'Antiquité expliquée et représentée* was published in ten folio

whole of ecclesiastical antiquity, and what a stroll! What a promenade through all pagan antiquity! He wrote thirteen folio volumes on pagan antiquities, and the mythological deities. Another monk sent the Abbé de Rancé a treatise on the Sirens: What sort of features had they? It shocked him. Mabillon¹ undertook the defence of learning, and discussed the question with moderation. I am very fond of Mabillon's erudition; there is something very gentle, very temperate about it; his discussions might be held up as a model for parliamentary debates, and, if they were copied, humanity would be the gainer. Very well, then! Mabillon said: "What will become of your own monks without learning?" That is true. But the Abbé de Rancé did not care for monks travelling, even in the cause of learning, nor for their journeys to all the libraries of Europe. Mabillon replied. The Abbé de Rancé answered with great eloquence, but with a touch of bitterness. (I should have liked to read something from the Abbé de Rancé for you.) Then Mabillon visited La Trappe. There was a charming, an adorable scene! They both knelt down face to face, and asked forgiveness for the sharp remarks and reproaches they had exchanged in their literary discussion.

From the depths of his desert the Abbé de Rancé's voice might have been heard giving spiritual direction. There were souls who turned to him as to an oracle. "What will this man, who has gone through what we are passing through, who has trod the same path we are treading, think of the state we are in?" The Princess Palatine was his great spiritual daughter. Read Bossuet's admirable description of her life after her conversion, after she had put herself under the Abbé de Rancé's guidance: manual labour, reading, no time for idle, dangerous musings. How the whole passage bears the stamp of de Rancé! He directed Madame de Montbazou's sisters, and, above

volumes in 1719.

¹ Jean Mabillon (1632–1707) was professed at Reims in 1654, transferred to St Germain des Près, edited the works of St Bernard, and the *Acta Sanctorum O.S.B.* He is regarded as the founder of the science of diplomatics, or the rules for discerning spurious from genuine documents. His *Traité des études monastiques*, in reply to de Rancé's attack, was published in 1691.

all, Madame de Longueville's friend, Mademoiselle de Vertus. "I have loved the world so well," said she to him, "that I rightly deserve not to be able to leave it when I love it no longer." He wrote to her: "If your mind cannot always be occupied with God, let your heart never fail to be so.... Since your delicate health will not suffer you to do much external penance, set no limits to the penance of your heart. The less you can do, the higher should be your aims."

And another interesting soul awaits our attention: Madame de la Sablière,¹ La Fontaine's friend, an outcast. She had let her heart follow its inclinations: *Qui amat animam suam perdet eam* {'He that loveth his life shall lose it', John 12:25}. One day she learned that a creature who sold herself was preferred to one who loved, and, with that, everything came to an end for her. She wrote to the Abbé de Rancé. He told her to harmonise the life of Martha with that of Mary, and she set herself to live with the sick. Madame de Sévigné writes of the visits she paid her at the Hospital for Incurables; it's most interesting. She cried when she lost a bird (I understand her grief; a bird that La Fontaine had talked to). She asked the Abbé de Rancé if she might have another, and he gave her permission, relying on the example of St John and his partridge.*

There is some fault to be found with his direction; it is good for those who, in order to obey the precept, must carry out the counsel, but the Abbé de Rancé is a little bit inclined to turn counsels into

¹ Marguerite de la Sablière (1640–1693), the friend and patron of the poet and greatest of French fabulists La Fontaine (1621–1695), after her marriage set up a salon in the Hôtel Rambouillet, which formed a meeting-place for the courtiers, scientists, poets, and authors of the day. In 1673 she received La Fontaine into her home, where he remained until her death. The Marquis de la Fare, already referred to as a type of the perfect egoist, broke off his connection with Madame de la Sablière for the sake of the actress La Champselee. Madame de la Sablière became a Catholic in 1679, and devoted herself to good works until her death.

* At least two legends have it that St John the Evangelist was found amusing himself with a partridge, and was reproached for it; the legends diverge concerning his response, but in any case, the Evangelist upheld the value of the refreshment that comes from caring for non-human animals.

precepts. “You find this hard, it seems to go against your nature; that is the very reason you should do it. You wish to see your father; it seems hard after so many years not to see him? You must not see him!” Perhaps he does not take into sufficient account that there is a legitimate element in natural wishes, and he tends to form the sort of conscience that attempts an impossible *crescendo*, and so constrains the soul. It is not true to say: “If something seems difficult to you, you are bound to do it.”

Saint-Simon went to see the Abbé de Rancé; he had the greatest respect for him, and did not venture to speak of such a sublimely holy life in memoirs so worldly as he wrote. He wanted to have a picture of the Abbé de Rancé, who was not the sort of man to have his portrait painted, and by spending 3,000 livres he took Rigaud,¹ the artist, along with him. He managed to get the three of them together, and Rigaud, after three interviews, painted de Rancé’s portrait from memory; and that is how we have the portrait. Saint-Simon let the Abbé de Rancé see it, and he remarked: “One of the ancients said: ‘I love treason because it is profitable, but I don’t like traitors.’ Well, I don’t like treason, but I love the traitor.” That’s very delightful. A man does not cease to be witty when he becomes a monk.

The Abbé de Rancé died in 1700.

¹ Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659–1743) was one of the foremost portrait painters of the seventeenth century. His portrait of Bossuet is in the Louvre, as also his mother’s, which is considered one of the masterpieces of French art. There are two examples of his work in the National Gallery, London—a portrait of Cardinal Fleury and one of the musician Lully.

LA TRAPPE¹ 1

IN the last lesson I began to tell you about the Abbé de Rancé. I say “began,” although, I think, I accompanied him almost up to his death, but I touched on only the outer side of his life. If he had been here, listening to me speaking about him, he would have had reason to complain of me; he would have thought that I was scarcely taking him seriously, because I did not let you see the important side of his life. On last Sunday I looked at him, in a way, only from the outside. I should like to study the life of those men whom he guided, to get a glimpse at their ideas on the soul, and on life as it should be understood.

So let us pay a visit to La Trappe in the wake of the innumerable pilgrims who, during the seventeenth century, travelled there from all quarters; let us follow their example, and examine the life of the monks as it was led under his guidance.

We saw how the Abbé de Rancé began by abandoning everything he possessed. First he gave up his wealth. You remember how, one day, he arrived at the foot of the Pyrenees, on a visit to the three Bishops of Comminges, Aleth, and Bayonne. One of them told him to give up his wealth, and he abandoned all his possessions; another told him to surrender his benefices, and he did so; the third told him to sacrifice himself, and he did it after having first said: “I! A monk! Never!” The reason he said so is, that it is far harder to leave oneself than one’s possessions. Still, in spite of his remark, that is what he actually did; he withdrew to La Trappe, to solitude, and the desert.

A THEBAID.

Both Robert de Molesme and St Bernard, the first Abbots of Citeaux and Clairvaux respectively, believed that in Citeaux and

¹. December 14, 1879.

Clairvaux the mode of life should be of the solitary type—that is to say, monastic, a life analogous to that led by the anchorites and first hermits of the Thebaid. The valley of Citeaux is really a Thebaid—that is to say, a desert; the abbey is like a little nest, hidden amongst the leaves, in the midst of the hills. On arriving, it is not visible at first; when we see the top of the bell tower, we are quite close to the monastery. It is a real place of retreat, a complete solitude. Its inhabitants have sought for a lost corner of the earth in which to take refuge and spend their lives.

Now, the Franciscans went about the towns evangelising the middle classes, who loved St Francis, and his disciples laboured to educate and instruct them, communicating to them the rapture of divine love which they themselves enjoyed.

We find the Jesuits in the great cities, where science is cultivated. They are scholars. It is an order that keeps in touch with the science and movements of the age, to regulate its progress, to direct it along the right path, to check it. They live in the midst of the world, because they should have a knowledge of men and things.

But that is not the case at La Trappe, which is a solitude, a desert. They are not missionaries, labouring for the salvation of the people, but men whose business in the desert is concerned with their own souls, men who believe it impossible to save themselves in the world. They go there to sanctify themselves, either in a spirit of reparation for great offences which they have committed, or in a spirit of sacrifice for the sins of others, for there are to be found amongst them men who have committed no grave faults.

The words in last Sunday's Gospel, and in that of today, might be applied to them. The many visitors to La Trappe in the seventeenth century might have been asked: "What went you out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?" No, certainly not. "But what went you out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold they that are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings."¹ No,

¹. Matt, vi 7, 8, 9.

that is not what they went out to see, and they could have given the same testimony of the Abbé de Rancé that Jesus gave of St John the Baptist. He was the forerunner of him who will one day judge the world, holding fire in his hand, of him who will leave no fault unpunished, who will separate the wheat from the chaff. And the Abbé de Rancé might have answered those who asked him, as the Jews of old asked St John: *Quid dicis de teipso*: What sayest thou of thyself?¹ He might have replied: *Ego sum vox clamantis in deserto*, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness; I am the voice of him who, being dead, yet speaketh: "*defunctus loquitur*" — for monks are the dead who still speak; they are dead to the world, and from the heart of death they still speak to Christian men.

ILLUSTRIOUS VISITORS.

Such, then, was the sight that might have been witnessed in the seventeenth century, and it was the solitary life which attracted men to the Abbé de Rancé, for he stood out as a great man. If you look for the men who won admiration and fame, you will notice that it was not the literary men, the scholars, the great writers of the age, such as Corneille, Racine, Boileau, Molière, and the rest; no, it was not they. The seventeenth century esteemed above all others great men, outstanding figures. It was dominating personalities, such as M. Arnauld and the Abbé de Rancé, who attracted the men of that age. Writers and scholars themselves recognised this superiority, the superiority of character. It is estimated that La Trappe welcomed 15,000 visitors. Everybody went there; great and small, noblemen and princes of science, all visited La Trappe.

They brought away with them souvenirs of their visit, which they looked on as relics, and I cannot, without emotion, consider Bossuet himself carrying away a memento from La Trappe, providing himself with little wooden spoons to send to Madame d'Albert, Madame de Beringham, and Sister Comuau. They despatched these souvenirs

¹. John i 22.

just as they would have sent off mats woven by St Paul, the first hermit. They were relics of the dead whom the whole world had gone out to see.

There was a constant stream of visitors. King James went there, after having been deprived of his throne by William of Orange. The loss of it did not worry him greatly; he was more of a monk than a Prince, he had the virtues of a monk rather than those of a soldier, and he had a taste for little else than prayer and solitude. The course of English politics did not greatly disturb him; he looked at it from his prie-dieu at St Germain, and made scarcely any attempt to fight, expecting everything as by a miracle from God. He made a mistake in wishing to win back his kingdom by manifestos which only served to raise the wall between himself and his subjects higher.

The Abbé de Rancé did not care very much for all these visits—he was afraid lest, in the end, discipline might suffer—but they did not greatly inconvenience the solitaries. One day the daughter of Gaston d'Orleans, the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, paid a visit to La Trappe. The Abbé de Rancé could not refuse her admittance, because monasteries were obliged to receive Princes and Princesses of the blood. Preparations were made for her reception, a prie-dieu covered with drapery was placed underneath a lamp in the chapel. The Grand Duchess knelt down on it. Well, after her departure a monk told the Abbé de Rancé that he had been tempted to look at the Bishop kneeling on the prie-dieu under the lamp. You may see that these men were dead—quite dead.

ARRIVAL AT THE MONASTERY.

What were their impressions on arriving at the guest-house? Much the same as one gets today. After mounting the hills and passing through uncultivated land, you come out on a plain of tilled fields, you recognise the monastery without having seen it as yet, because the whole countryside round is tended with a care that is full of love: the love of God brought to the cultivation of the earth. You pass by fields, you arrive at the monastery, and you are made

welcome. It is a monastic tradition to give a welcome to absolutely everyone who presents himself, and to entertain them for some days, even when they do not tell who they are; your name is asked for the visitors' book, but you are not obliged to mention it. You are taken inside and you wait in a small parlour. Presently two monks come in; perhaps in punishment for a fault, or perhaps the Abbot wishes to give them an opportunity of practising virtue—it does not matter very much. The two religious approach and prostrate themselves before you; they do not merely kneel down, they prostrate themselves at your feet. It seems a bit odd. You go inside, and on every wall there are inscriptions such as, "Think well on it," "For ever," "Never."

This makes an impression, because you are not accustomed to such ideas, and, as that is so, you begin to feel irritated. Moreover, they are the sort of ideas that cannot be endured for any length of time: "Death," "Judgement," "Eternity," "For ever!" "Never!" They send a cold shiver down your spine. We quickly put them aside. We get away from thoughts such as these.... But all the same, some day or another, willy-nilly, we shall have to face them. They are the warriors of salvation, *propugnatores* {champions; defenders}; such thoughts strengthen the soul against grief, and force it to wage war against the passions. They are like God's angels, messengers to remind us of heaven. They seem to me like the angel who descended to wrestle with Jacob. Jacob fought all night; he fought until morning without giving in, and he was called *Israel*—that is, strong against God. There are no strong souls save those who have resolutely faced such thoughts as death and eternity, who have triumphed over the fear these thoughts inspire. For a Christian soul it is one of the conditions of "*To be or not to be*."

We go inside the monastery. These monks make us feel rather afraid; they cause a sort of uneasiness, hard to define. They do not look attractive, and as we are not well disposed towards what we consider ugly, we ask ourselves: "What is the meaning of this whole business?" We should not like to work at farming, or carrying burdens that bend our backs during the summer's heat dressed in a

thick, brown serge habit; we should not like to go barefoot in the depths of winter, or sleep on a hard bed. So we say: "These people are leading such a dreadful sort of life that they must be glad when death comes to release them. Does God demand all that?... Isn't life full enough of real evils without inventing others, and condemning oneself to such a hard life?... Isn't perfection something more moderate than that?"

I recall the faces of some I know who are living in the world. All of us have known old persons who have had experience of all the sorrows of life: loss of friends, relations, and possessions; they are gentle under all the strokes of misfortune; they seem to be a personification of goodness; their life is laden with blessings, like the ripe ears of corn at harvest time. I recall them to mind, and I say: "Are not these souls practising Christian perfection in a better way?"

Yes, but besides such persons, unfortunately only too few, have I not known others on whom life has produced quite different results? If there are some whom misfortune has strengthened—like finely tempered steel—how many are there not who lie stricken by the wounds of friendship (the most terrible of all) or the wounds of pride?... Bitter and sad, they give rise to all sorts of painful reflections and produce a repugnance to life itself.... I see very clearly misfortunes nobly borne, and the beauty of souls whose life is filled with evils courageously supported, but how many more may be seen on whom quite the opposite effect has been produced?

At the sight of these monks I easily say: *Ut quid perditio haec!* {'Why has this been wasted?', Matt 26:8} I see talents concealed; young, strong lives swallowed up. What is the use of destroying so many lives? Let us undeceive ourselves: the life of these monks is not manslaughter; men are slain by their passions, and the love of pleasure, and the Trappists are here to fight against that.... They are happy, they lead a regular life, they know what they have to do, they are accustomed to do the same things every day; they rise during the night to chant matins, they work with their hands during the day, they have made an offering of their bodily sufferings, and the sorrows of their souls to God—so their life is not useless. I lead a

rather haphazard sort of life myself, chiefly made up of velleities. I sit down by the fire with the intention of doing some work. I warm myself, and by making myself comfortable, prepare to free my mind to be able to get to work; I sit down in an armchair, and I think, the more comfortably I settle into it, the better I shall work. Oh!... most certainly.... There is a newspaper beside me, or a book with a yellow cover which I can take from the bookshelf without moving... and there is a whole evening gone!

How many evenings go by like that, how many wasted days, how many wasted years! And after leading such a life, which has not yet run half its course, after this useless sort of life, there is a sadness, an uneasiness that makes an apparently happy life, a comfortable and fortunate life, sometimes intolerable.... If, for instance, I had spent my life in study, I might have enriched my mind with new knowledge; if I had acquired a virtue, my horizon would have been widened; if I had, by a little struggle, attained to spiritual stability, my will would have been strengthened, and the powers of my soul increased.... Besides, is it so easy to remain virtuous in the world? Does not the mind, if turned on certain objects, tend to go astray? Will the heart, if it be fixed on certain things, remain pure? Evidently not. So that I can see, even in my own case, the justification of those who spend their lives simply, but in a manner which, at the same time, sustains them. The rule is their support! They have something definite to do. Most human lives are unhappy precisely because persons cannot say: "I have something to do, something important, something that needs a man and a bit of courage." The first cry of a soul coming to such a director as the Abbé de Rancé: "Give me something to do, something worth while." "Give me," says the soul which has aspirations, but has so far done nothing, because it has been without guidance—"give me something to occupy me! Strengthen me by some penitential exercise, a retreat that will give me the feeling that, if I have sinned, if I have wasted my life on trifles, there is still something in me that may be utilised for God, a victim which I can slay."

I still keep looking at these monks, and the same thought still

pursues me. I see these words constantly: *Ut quid perditio haec!* Is it not a waste of human life? All around La Trappe I have seen well-tilled fields, but how many young lives have been spent on the work! How many lives are worn out by perpetual fast and the observance of a severe rule! There are some things we never get used to.... I used to know a religious who told me that, after thirty years of monastic life, he had never got used to getting up in the middle of the night to chant matins. It is the sort of thing that always fatigues. The Abbé de Rancé fixed the hour of the first meal at midday. "Our fathers," said he, "were stronger and more austere." St Bernard and his disciples did not break their fast until four o'clock in the afternoon. That is the sort of prolonged fast that wears out life. Is it not suicidal, then? Oh, no!...

Amongst the bravest of these men I quickly pick out those of gentle birth. I recognise them by the nobler and more perfect way they bear privations. At La Trappe, in 1699, you might have seen a young English nobleman, Lord Perth, who had been converted by Bossuet. He did not live very long. He was still quite young, a mere lad, twenty-one years of age, but he had already been through a great deal. He became a Catholic after his arrival in France. His mother, who was a Protestant, brought him home, and forced him to abjure Catholicism. He then gave free rein to his passions, and went far, very far, in evil; in the end he came to La Trappe. La Trappe has always had a special attraction for the English; it strikes their imagination, and even today there are in England many Trappist and reformed Benedictine monasteries, so reformed that there is scarcely any difference between them now than that of a black or white habit; they have monasteries in all their colonies, even in Australia.

So Lord Perth went to La Trappe. His uncle, who was also a good Christian, wrote to the Abbé de Rancé:

"But how can you think my nephew will be content at La Trappe on one meal a day, after having been used to four? My nephew cannot get up before ten o'clock in the morning; how do you think he can rise at midnight? My nephew is very fastidious; he can never have a bed soft enough for his taste, the smallest wrinkle in the

sheets prevents him from sleeping; he needs an eiderdown quilt: how do you think he can get accustomed to the plank, which is the only bed a Trappist has?"

Now, when suffering is willingly accepted, it is a source of joy; it dignifies the whole person. The young man died very soon. It was not the life at La Trappe killed him—I am much more inclined to set down his death to the account of the years during which he gave rein to his passions—but he gave himself up wholly to a life of suffering, and in it he found new strength, a kind of joy and peace, the peace of heart that is so attractive, for there is nothing so attractive as peace. It is so pleasant to find oneself in the company of persons who have found peace that one would go to the ends of the earth to be with them. You have a feeling that such a soul is like the earth about to welcome its Saviour: "*Aperiatur terra et germinet salvatorem.*" {'Let the earth be opened and bud forth a saviour,' Isaiah 45:8} The soil has been made ready, the iron has penetrated and made room for the seed to be planted there. The ground has been opened by sacrifice, and the fruitfulness of divine life may be found there: *germinet salvatorem.*

You would prefer to see moderation and tranquillity at La Trappe, but are you not aware that there is an element of violence in human nature, and that a soul which can bear excess cannot bear moderation? Read what St Ignatius says about temperance at one's meals (it looks a mere trifle, but it is by no means easy to carry out). It is a sort of experiment; the soul is to make use of certain things, according to certain proportions, which it considers reasonable. St Ignatius was seeking for a standard best fitted to make his religious virtuous, energetic, hard-working, and learned.

The Abbé de Rancé was looking for nothing like that. He wanted to form a solitary, a martyr; he pointed to our Lord on the Cross and said: "Did not our Lord Jesus Christ go to extremes?" It is true that our Lord, in his love for us, did go to extremes, and there are some souls who could not be saved except by similar measures. St Bernard says somewhere: "I might have gone to a milder order, but my soul could not live with lesser austerities." Such persons need suffering,

because they are thinking on God's love for them, and if they spent a day without suffering, they would believe that they were forgotten by God; they would be saddened if they did not think that there was something to be done for his sake, some violent suffering to be offered up to him. Such an idea is a great help to them. The suffering is real, but with it goes the thought that there is a work to be done, and the soul experiences calm and peace in the thought that it is loved by Jesus Christ and associated with his sorrows.

Perhaps you may say: "The Abbé de Rancé was no father; how could he be a father if he were such a man as that? Everyone has not a mind like his." His own reply would have been that he was only imitating St Bernard. St Bernard was wonderfully gracious; he had the heart of a father, filled with sympathy for the sufferings of his monks. There is nothing more touching than his relations with them. His monks gathered about him like the children of a family with their eyes fixed on their father. It is one of the most moving sights in a Trappist monastery. The monks love their father, because this austere life frees the affections of the human soul from all its fetters: the greater the soul's detachment from earthly things, the less egotistical it grows; the more it suffers, the more it becomes affectionate. St Bernard told his monks that he felt infinite compassion at the sight of their sufferings; that he shared their burdens, which often saddened him; that he wished to suffer with them, but had no desire to envy their sacrifice or snatch it from them.

The Abbé de Rancé received from his monks little notes such as the following (it was from the Count de Santena, who was ill and had been threatened with some dispensations from the rule):

"I respectfully take the liberty of asking you to continue the permission you have already granted me of following out the common life until I die. For the love of our Lord Jesus Christ I beg you to forget I have a body."

You see how he was, in a way, forced by his monks to maintain the severity of the rule. Hence "he never envied them their glory," nor did he seek to diminish it. If he were austere, it was precisely

because he was obliged by the movements of divine grace to be austere. It is said that he was a severe director, and that is true; he was a doctor prepared to carry out one of those major operations which may save a life. He was not a Fénelon looking at things under a microscope, examining them minutely; nor had he the simplicity of Bossuet, who, on seeing in a soul a spark of goodwill, immediately thought all was well, and began to intone the Cantic of Canticles. No, he was not a bit like that.

MADAME DE LA SABLIERE.

One day the Abbé de Rancé received the following letter from Madame de la Sablière; it was after her conversion, and after she had been attacked by an illness (it was cancer) which caused her cruel sufferings:

“Whilst I lived in the world, I always regarded this disease with the horror it naturally inspires. Since my conversion, I have offered it up to our Lord Jesus Christ, and I find in the sentiments he has given me such an alleviation of my sufferings as makes me feel well, and prepared to refuse all human help. If worldly people could only conceive the satisfaction and peace to be found in suffering in union with Jesus Christ, they would be envious of such happiness.”

What can a director do when he has received such a letter, chiselled out, as it were, by the hammer of divine grace? Nothing! All he can do is accept it, and permit the soul, thus taken captive by the love of suffering, to yield to its attraction. What do you want him to do with such souls as that? Nothing but what the Abbé de Rancé did. He was faced with such lofty spirits, devoted to suffering and absolute detachment, and so he did not go before them, he did not urge them on; they followed him, and that is all!

I see the monks in their chapel. It is a moving sight, calculated to make conversions; what a beautiful example of brotherhood is the kiss of peace before Holy Communion! Fr. de Gratry's ideal of a city in which all loved one another is a reality for those who have visited

La Trappe.

At the sight of these monks we feel a sort of curiosity; we should like to know their stories, to know what beats beneath these serge habits. There is always an element of mystery about it; nobody ever knows the complete history of a conversion, not even of one's own. What has preceded it may be easily seen, but that's all. Our Lord's action is extremely variable. Disgust may be observed, but disgust only prepares, it does not attach. When God allows us to see a soul that loves him, and leaves all to follow him, we say, "It has had this or that disappointment," but such is not the case... It is true that, after some blows, life cannot be looked on in the same light; the sunshine has gone out of things, they have changed their appearance; we emerge, as it were, from the grave. The most difficult moment in any great trial is not just when we have been struck down by it; we are then stunned, as it were, by the violence of the blow, and we do not measure its full weight. The most painful moments are those that come after. Blow after blow is rained, as it were, on us after we have been struck down; they fall on us in a thousand different manners and a thousand times a day. This is what happens after we have lost someone: we then see things in a different light. The blows disenchant us with life, but they do not make us look up towards heaven. On the contrary, there is a tendency to see nothing but a desert all around us, and the heavens empty. Modern poetry is full of such an impression of souls who no longer believe because they are suffering. Many seem to have become hostile to the faith, and they are only hostile to suffering. Men think they can no longer rely on the goodness of God; they imagine they lie prostrate beneath the strokes of injustice, and they are scandalised at the mystery of human suffering. No; suffering of itself does not bring about conversion; for conversion, grace must be at hand to do its work.

SOLDIERS AND LA TRAPPE.

There were many military men at La Trappe. There was an old companion of Turenne's there, M. de St Louis, and also a very

distinguished officer, Colonel d'Albergotte.

On the day after a public festival, of which he had been the hero,¹ he wrote to the Abbé de Rancé asking to be admitted to La Trappe. What had happened? Nothing in particular, save that the same sort of impressions are produced by the joys of life as by the sorrows with which it is filled. A man says to himself: "And is that all, then, that life can give me? I see that celebrations such as these cannot satisfy the soul, and I see what God demands of me: '*Latum mandatum tuum nimis.*'" {"Thy commandment is exceeding broad", Ps 118:96} Satiety is also a preparation for conversion, but yet it is not the mysterious stroke that brings the tree down on God's side; there is something divine in a conversion, something that cannot be explained....

La Trappe was held in honour in the army. Amongst the grenadiers who fell at the siege of Namur there were many who wore hair shirts that they had procured from La Trappe. A Captain wrote to the Abbé de Rancé: "When I happen to fall into sin, I can neither eat nor sleep until I have gone to confession." There is an analogy between a soldier's and a Trappist's life, between Lamoricière's men and the monks at Staoüéli. I can see quite well that such a severely disciplined life appeals to soldiers. They say: "That's how God should be served, in a soldierly fashion."

There is just one other point raised by the sight of these monks: "Is there an obligation on some souls to follow this path?... Can the counsels ever become precepts?" Taken in themselves, No. But there are some who will not be saved if they do not proceed to the practice of the counsels, because God asks far more of them than he does of others. God can do that. There are some (I am not speaking now of scrupulous souls who, from the mere fact that an idea occurs to them, believe they are bound to carry it out) — there are some who realise that their salvation is in danger if they do not do some certain definite thing, if they do not freely bind themselves to do it. Very

¹. It took place during the campaign in Flanders (R.).

well! Now such souls are bound, in the name of their own salvation, in the name of prudence, to obey the voice that speaks to them in secret; the voice of God does not speak to us when we are excited. If you ask them when did they hear the voice of God, they will tell you: "It was when I felt most master of myself, when I was calmest, when my life was least disturbed."

Divine love makes its own demands. If you take your *Gradus ad Parnassum* {ascent to Parnassus} and look for an epithet to go with "*amor*" {love}, you will find "*dulcis*" {sweet}, "*dulcis amor*." Yes, that's quite correct. But divine love is also "*durus amor*" {harsh love} and, for some souls, at certain times, there are bitter trials to be gone through. There are some souls to whom God says: "You must go through that." The greater number of the men in a Trappist monastery have heard that voice. For them love is a "*durus amor*." This idea is set out by the Abbé de Rancé in his books; I am putting forward this plea for the Trappist in his own words. God sets them apart, to lead a more perfect life, to share in his own glory, to set up a standard for human nature.... It is God's will that human nature should be honoured by souls who lead a sort of angelic life on earth. Furthermore, as there are so many people who do not pray at all, it is quite fitting that God should set some apart to pray to him on behalf of those others. The Trappist example sustains and gives courage. "I shall seek them out in the desert," said St Ephraem, "that I may see the holiness of their lives. I confess their life amazes me, and I grow fearful as I study them; but even were I to remain with them for but a few moments, my languid, feeble soul would be strengthened and braced."

It was objected: "These men will not live long."

"Very well," said the Abbé de Rancé, in reply, "but are there no circumstances in which you are bound to risk your life, or shorten it by excessive labour? When there is question of God and one's own salvation, must not an effort be made, even though the body should somewhat suffer from it?" That's perfectly true. I still think of the monks tilling the fields. It is not how I used to think of La Trappe. I pictured to myself men in habits, passing like shadows through long

corridors, lofty cloisters, or seated at tables surrounded by books. No; it is not a bit like that. A Trappist works with his hands from six to seven hours a day. The Abbé de Rancé will tell you that this is necessary, and that men live by toil; he will tell you that gifts made to monasteries in order to dispense them from certain works — such as harvesting, for instance, — weakened discipline, because, if such gifts are accepted, a state, which is quite the contrary to the monastic one, is rapidly fallen into; he will tell you, furthermore, that such work, looked on, as it is, as humiliating, keeps the mind submissive. He will tell you that labour such as this is despised, but that it is good for monks to practise humility. Once he saw a shepherd watching his flock in an absolutely desert spot, all alone, and very happy at being so, with no one to speak to, and only the heavens and the stars above him. Tilling the earth, if it does not improve the mind, improves the soul.

One director will devote his attention to deeds; the Abbé de Rancé was chiefly concerned with the state of the soul, its habitual state, and the progressive movements that cause it to mount, step by step, towards perfection. He says that such work as does not entirely occupy the mind, but allows it to pray, and occupy itself with God, is good.

On entering the cloister, monks may be seen reading. They have not many books; those they have were received from the Abbot, who gave them with the same solemnity as he gave Holy Communion, for the book is to be their friend during many days. They will read it attentively; it is the only one they will have.

THE MAURISTS.

It is quite different in the case of the monks of St Maur; they study and are scholars in various branches of learning. The torch of learning is handed on from one monk to another; the mind is enlarged; new horizons open out, as they expand before a traveller, and certain aspects of human nature are better understood. The monk of Citeaux was to have only one book, the Sacred Scriptures,

which were to be meditated on, and, as it were, grappled with. Such was learning as understood at La Trappe: nothing for the sake of mere curiosity, everything for the formation of the soul. The culture of the mind came first with the Maurist, the culture of the soul with the solitary of La Trappe. If you read works written by the Benedictines you will notice how widely varied is their knowledge. Read, for example, Dom Massuet's¹ *Treatise on the Priesthood of Jesus Christ*, and many other such books written at that time; they all display great learning. "Monks are not monks for that purpose," said the Abbé de Rancé; "learning should be used for spiritual profit and enrichment."

This was the fundamental point of the dispute which went on during his declining years.

The Church loves learning; it reveres the monks of St Maur and all learned Benedictines — Cardinal Bona,² for instance, and his works on the liturgy; Cardinal Sfrondati,³ who had been a monk of St Gall; the Dominican Casanata,⁴ who founded the Minerva Library,

¹. Dom Massuet (1666–1716) made his profession as a Benedictine monk in 1682; he took up his residence in St Germain des Près in 1703, and taught theology there until his death. His most remarkable work is an edition of St Irenæus, published in 1710, with dissertations on the life, writings, and teaching of the saint, and the heresies he combated.

². Giovanni Bona (1609–1674) joined the Cistercian order, and in 1651 was elected President-General of the whole Congregation. He wrote a number of ascetical works, some of which have been translated into English — e.g., *Manductio ad cœlum*, the English title of which is "A Guide to Eternity" (1900). His greatest work is *De Rebus Liturgicis*, published in 1671.

³. Celestino Sfrondati (1644–1696) joined the Benedictines, and was elected Prince-Abbot of St Gall in 1689, created Cardinal in 1695. Besides writings against Gallicanism and Jansenism, he published a *Cursus Theologicus* in ten volumes (1670).

⁴. Girolamo Casanata (1620–1700), though never a Dominican priest, was a great friend and benefactor of the order, and was assisted at his death by two Dominicans. In 1693 was appointed Librarian of the Vatican. His chief service to learning was the formation of a great library, which he bequeathed to the Dominicans, as also funds to establish a college known as Santa Maria sopra Minerva, or the "Minerva," now the Collegio Angelico.

and many others like them. All this is encouraged by the Church, but it was not suitable for the type of life the Abbé de Rancé had in mind for solitaries, who should, first of all, give an example of an austere life. His idea was that no one would ask them what they had received, but how far had they done penance.

The Trappists are not, however, strangers to all forms of learning. When we read St Bernard's eighty-six sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, we ask ourselves could these have been delivered to men devoid of instruction? They contain learned analyses of human nature brought face to face with God. Now it is, precisely, this sort of learning which penetrates and nourishes the soul.

Leibnitz set himself up as a judge in this controversy between the Benedictines of St Maur and the Abbé de Rancé. (He did the same with regard to Quietism, and gave a verdict in favour of Fénelon, so we can estimate his point of view.) Now Leibnitz, who was a Protestant, says that all the manuscripts, and all the sciences along with them, would have been lost were it not for the monasteries. He saw quite clearly the difference that exists between learned monks and solitaries who had renounced all, but he was in favour of having various religious orders in the Church.

"Such a variety is both useful and beautiful. Learned monks are needed, and it is also well that M. de la Trappe has raised up before our eyes great examples of the solitary life which seemed to be about to die out...

The Abbé de Rancé, in his writings, does not present a Trappist's life as that of a solitary who needs to do penance for himself, but rather as a man who has come there to make himself a sacrifice for others. Such was the place in the sun which he asked for his monks; he asked it on behalf of all our needs, on behalf of God's claims upon some chosen souls. He asks to be allowed to exist, in some corner or another, as a victim standing between sinners and God.